Miss Varian of New York

A NEWPORT AND NEW YORK SOCIETY NOVEL.

BY

?

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G. W. CARLETON & CO.

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MISS VARIAN, OF NEW YORK

A Newport and New York Society Novel.

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MISS VARIAN OF NEW YORK.

CHAPTER I.

THE MIRROR OF VENICE.

THE face of a mirror resembles an elusive and profound enigma. As you look into it there rise behind your own the spectral reflections of all the other faces which have looked and passed away. A haunting enigma: the mirror seems to absorb in its depths those thousand reflections cast on its stretch in all the yesterdays. A sombre enigma: for the mirror holds often the shadow of eyes whose look is gone beyond eternity. A mocking enigma: the cold sheet stands unbroken and unrevealing while craving eyes rest where once those others rested, which belong now only to the mirror and to the grave.

The clear stretch of a Venetian mirror, framed in old silver, reflected a young girl seated at her toilet. Wax lights, clustered at the mirror's side, shone very soft and pure on the bared white curves of her arms and throat and on the face. It was the face of a Psyche—Psyche awakening under the touch of Love, wistful,—with calm and tender lines, over whose softness had stolen a disquiet, new and full of exquisite shadowed pain, like a subtle, tremulous glow of life in marble. As she leaned back in her chair there was reflected behind her a sallow, bent face with eyes on the gold

of her hair, where a young woman fastened a glistening butterfly of filagree and opals. The Psyche's eyes, deep and full of changing light, had in them a dreaming look, like that of one whom Hope shows Happiness comes near. The butterfly, emblem of joy, poised like a woven sunbeam, reflecting in the lights of her crowning hair its gold.

The bent face was raised, with a fugitive flash of hard eyes whose black was shifting as a snake's but bold. She stood back, assuming a caressing expression as lightly as a dark leaf gleams in stirring.

"Now, Miss Varian, I have arranged it as nicely as I can. Will you kindly look?"

The words, in an agreeable voice marked equally by an English accent and by peculiar light inflections, at once indefinably supercilious and insincere, penetrated through the reverie of Psyche, as a voice breaks through the web of sleep with words which, hearing, the brain does not interpret. She turned her head as if in listening; then her eyes rested on the mirror's face which bore the reflection of her. A rich and soft blush flowed and fainted as she looked; her eyes were resting where they fell with a superb impulse of pride apart from vanity. A great warmth of joy was in her heart. She thought: "He will be there —it is for him."

"Which of your flowers will you choose for to-night, Miss Varian?"

The voice was a tone lower and harder in its sound. The maid's blunt lips shut together sullenly and heavily. Her eyes had watched the reflected face in its beauty, on which the changes had passed like the glow of deep lights on a lotos flower. She interpreted the expressions which passed on the face like breaths

on the mirror; an incalculable envy stirred her, the dominant mute passion of her life; from her heart into her look sprang the invincible base hate of him who covets to him who has. She dropped her eyelids.

"Give me the orchids and the opal clasp."

"The orchids sent just now by Mr. Gerard?"

"Naturally. Are there others beside those?"

A fine vibration of coldness passed into her voice as she replied. The question had in it something blunt, indefinably too direct, jarring the strung chords of her sensibility. She seemed to detect some subtle tone of an antagonism which found voice in the speech, probing even so slightly the sensitive fibres of an unacknowledged emotion.

The maid laid before her a basket of orchids, white, gold stamened, with faint green flecks. Gerard had sent these to her for the night of the last grand *fête* at Newport. His card was at the handle of the basket. As she read again his name, a new sensation swept through her, magnetic, with a warm joy in it, like the fulness of a rich perfume.

She thought: "To see him, so soon—so soon! Ah, I am happy!"

It was almost a sigh, the breath which stirred the fragile white orchids as she looked down into the clusters of them.

From her jewel-case, an old precious cabinet of gold and steel inlaid on ivory, whose shallow drawers, quaint handled, were lined with shining, faint-blue satin stuff, faded, full of memories and years, the maid took out a clasp of fire-opals.

"May I arrange the flowers now, ma'am?" The voice was conciliating, but through it changed the light insincere inflections characteristic of it.

"No, I shall fasten them. Where is the brooch?"

The young girl's face, whose eyes held the light of a hope which is joy, was infinitely tender. She took from the hand of the other the opals. As she drew them from the lingering fingers she heard a sigh.

"How beautiful!" murmured the maid, under her breath. Her hands fell by her sides with a gesture listless and desponding.

Gladys Varian glanced up into her face. The hard black eyes, which for her were softened, always judiciously, looked beyond, as if towards a future very bitter.

The hand that held the opals paused and laid them down.

"Poor, without friends, an orphan . . . . and I so happy . . . . so happy . . . ."

The thought passed by her like the echo of a voice in reproach. A warm impulse of compassion touched her—the generous desire to console of a noble heart.

She raised a brooch of gold, like the face of the laughing quarter-moon, and touched the wrist of the girl beside her.

"Eliza, wear this at your throat for me. It saddens me to see you sad when I am—happy." Her voice dropped with an unconscious inflection, shy and lingering and very sweet. The maid received the gift with a *soupçon* of melancholy tingeing like a shadow her delight.

"Ah, Miss Gladys, you are rich and happy: but how few are rich and happy and yet, like you, ready to spare the slightest trifle of their wealth to others! I will keep it always in remembrance of your kind thought for me—alone in a strange land. . . ." She ceased with a short sigh. The eye of the quarter-moon

gleamed redly, with a responsive hypocritical twinkle up towards her black and secret eyes. She, as she gazed at the gift of her mistress, perceiving the ruby with its sudden gleams, thought: "She will expect to see it always; or I could sell it for a good sum. Faugh!"

Gladys had fastened the orchids at her breast. The clasp of opals flashed with superb lights, blending mist and flame. The opal eyes of the poised butterfly were rich above her hair. She drew on one of her long white gloves and rose. Standing before the mirror she looked into the sheet as one looks in farewell to the eyes of a familiar friend, which reflect with the response of sympathy one's hopes that go towards fruition.

Behind in the shadow the blunt lips of the maid shut doggedly with hate. She had taken the gift, as her kind will do, hating the giver seven times the more. On the radiant reflected figure her look struck sombre as a curse.

Gladys, unconscious of it, turned away, and passed through her ante-room to the grand staircase.

Behind her the mirror, mysterious, absorbent, held in its sheet the reflection of the scene which had passed, and waited, listening for the steps of the coming future.

CHAPTER II.

"LE MONDE S'AMUSE."

MRS. VARIAN was beside her daughter as their carriage passed with the stream of vehicles towards the scene of the night. She wore a gown of superb satin veiled in black lace: with her soft brown silky hair, which combined in its grace of coiffure a charming dignity of matronhood, and her eyes, under curved lids, peculiarly sweet, she produced an impression of high-bred femininity in contrast with many women of her own society and generation, who, having coquetted with Youth till he fled, coquetted with Time, hoping to dupe the world with him as Youth. This lady had dainty little gestures and small hands; the details of her toilette were always perfect, she had a delicate perception of the fitness of things; hers was a charming soft *tout-ensemble*, at once sympathetic and original. She perceived, with that sensibility which had rendered so gracious her progress through all the phases of her life, her daughter's mood, who lay back in silence and repose, the curve of her throat like moulded marble. Mrs. Varian glanced at the grand throat.

"Ah!" she murmured with satisfaction. "And to some poor women, charitable, well-intentioned, infinitely Christian, heaven yet will give such unattractive daughters." Her lips closed in a smile: she settled herself with complacency more easily on her

cushions. At the moment she observed the peculiar and fragile blossoms of the orchids, an expression of curiosity mingled with the arch sweetness of her eyes.

"Whose flowers are those, my Gladys?" She always addressed the young girl with the caressing pronoun of possession. The latter did not move as she replied:

"They came from Mr. Gerard."

On her face, in the shadows, drifted a blush like a deep light touching even the revealed curve of her throat.

Mrs. Varian could judge swiftly, from subtle outward indications, the workings of a mind before her. She gave a little half breathed laugh to herself in her roomy nook, raising her eyebrows and dropping the curved lids.

"Ah, such flowers, and such a throat! . . . . Will he speak to-night, I wonder?"

The scene of the *fête* was superb of its sort; the essence of Newport society was distilled, as it were, in these rose-laden rooms; a thousand rich perfumes suggested themselves as the wind drifted idly from the gardens beyond. Through the open arches of a broad piazza, the light of the stars met with a certain pale irony the light of many diamonds.

Gladys and Mrs. Varian passed up the staircase of the cottage palace and entered that room where the ladies reviewed their toilettes and their coiffures on arrival. There was a confusion of low talk, one woman to another, breathing light secrets of the hour's light gossip; the rich *houish* of a silk cloak falling; neat maids offered gilded invisible pins for the hair of blonde buds at the toilet-tables; a little lady, highly finished, delicated-handed, quiet and *petite*, re-

moved a thick false "bang" from the shining dark curls that lay above her enigmatic eyes, preserving by the expedient of a subtly coquettish prudence the chief charm of her coiffure.

Holding a mirror, her arm raised to fit a sapphire-hilted dagger in her hair, the curve of her form to her waist throwing off a faint glow from the supple silk stuff clinging to it, stood a young girl. An elder lady small, stout, short-breathed and disconnected, stood by admonishing her hurriedly, with suggestions to which she replied a smile irresistible in its radiance and youth. Seeing that her wordy advice, like the bulk of sage advice, remained untaken, the small stout lady plucked at the rich lace on her gown. It was a characteristic action: full of words, in a perpetual hurry, she always resorted in half instants of leisure, to harassing the patterns of her Brussels and Mechlin as a method of keeping up the pace.

At the moment she caught sight of Mrs. Varian entering on that carpet of smiles which society laid down before her wealth and charm. The expression of fretful perplexity with which she had watched the dagger hilt vanished: sincere and cheerful welcome irradiated her comfortable face; throwing open her fan, which she flicked vivaciously, she resembled, making cordial haste towards her friend, a portly agitated butterfly.

"Why, Marie, how fortunate I've met you now, instead of in the crush downstairs—I always like a crush except when I want to catch a friend to speak to for a moment, and then she is always sure to be just too far off to get to—you know it is so provoking, people always come in the way. . . . How lovely Gladys looks to-night—is it true Gloster Gerard is paying her attention?—he's to be here I think. Look at her with

my Sidney!—I believe those children really love each other, and now-a-days I never see anything but girls trying to cut each other out with society as stage-favorites try to do with the public. But what am I detaining you for with your cloak still on? You are so good-natured, Marie!"

Thus the indefatigable butterfly, fluttering hastily toward the toilet-table, characterized, as society did, the high-bred courtesy of her friend. Mrs. Varian passing after her, displayed that perfection of carriage which distinguished her, and replied, with subtle gradations of warmth pervading the uniform charm of her manner, to the many feminine salutes which she received.

Gladys had cast off a cloak lined with the soft feathers of the rose-hued flamingo, and stood, the hand of Sidney in her own, playing lightly with some old jewels on it. As she smiled, and the other's smile replied, the smile of the eyes which is sincere, she looked like a flower of the pale arum, on whose lips played the shadows of dancing butterflies.

"Will Mr. Varian come later on? You see we are alike in a great deal, dear; we each have a daughter whom we love, but you are happier than I—you still have a husband as well." The black fan had ceased to flick with vivacity—a look of childish, piteous wistfulness touched on the face where fat and prettiness blended—the poor little woman recalled amidst her haste a grief beyond which she had never succeeded in hurrying her heart.

Mrs. Varian laid her hand with a delicate suggestion of sympathy upon her wrist; Sidney raised abruptly deeply soft, magnetic eyes, full of a strangely profound compassion. This look suggested with force a

soul in which the more powerful emotions were still dormant, but stirring to awaken. Gladys rested on the small appealing face, a moment's glance full of strong feeling. She comprehended.

An instant passed—the pause was broken.

"Are you ready, Sidney?" asked her mother. Throwing open again her large fan she seemed to chase with its sweep the *tristesse* which had touched her, and led, with Mrs. Varian, the way down the staircase to the scene of the *fête*.

Gerard and Van Blancken were watching the waltzers from beside a French window giving on the cool piazza.

"I wonder if you'd change much as a married man, Gerard?" said Van Blancken. He laughed: his was a thoroughly masculine changing voice, with a hearty intonation of enjoyment. "My wife has her opinions about you." Gerard glanced aside momentarily towards one of the most coquettish and perfect figures in the dance.

"Well, Van, you had good luck, my friend. For me—I have long been a bachelor; even your wife's opinions don't tempt me." His eyes were very dark, and he smiled as he spoke, a slight smile under his mustache.

"Ah!" said Van Blancken with more gravity. "Newport is a poor place for a man to stay in, ruminating on marriage. The women want to spend such a pot of money on everything they fancy. I tell you most of them only seem to value things by the lot it takes to buy them."

"Bad taste," remarked Gerard.

"That's the way most of them feel, and don't you forget it. When a man has his stables to keep up, his

wife's turn of mind comes to be a consideration. With some of us it amounts to—stables, and you've got an interest in life; as wife and—you've clean nothing!"

"Well, Van Blancken, you're tied up yourself, or society and the buds that bloom in it would not take your philosophies kindly. Besides, your stables and your wife's toilettes come up to perfection—you don't need to talk—"

"Yes, and between my horses and m' wife, the beasts should go, Gerard. I was a bachelor longer than you and enjoyed it too—I swear I did!" He broke into his own talk with an asservation and hearty laughter, such as a man will give when his reminiscences amuse him. "Enjoyed it, too! But I'm broke in now, and I say a good bachelor makes a good husband by contrast."

Van Blancken's brown eyes, flecked with green, sparkled, and shifted off towards his wife.

Gerard laughed with an inflection of satire.

"Bravo, Belmont!"

The dance was ceasing. Mrs. Van Blancken, known in her set by the soubriquet of "Caprice," was seated, chatting with bewitching vivacity to an old friend of her husband's bachelor days, especially of those most enjoyable. Leaning above her was a long, lean figure, with extensive legs, on one of which it rested; a monstrous prominent bold eagle beak; large, roving, wild and restless eyes; fashionable evening dress, to which his fine air lent remarkable distinction, and thick hair, where black and silver splashed together in startling unusual contrasts, and on whose billows rose crests of foamy white. This was Jesse B. Hartshorn, perhaps the most witty, eccentric, and popular man in the society of the Empire City. Near by a tall

young fellow stood, seeking to hide his uneasy worship of Caprice in the high prevailing collar, and taking in all he could comprehend of the badinage passing between her and Hartshorn. The latter shed down on her his concentrative glance, which seemed to focus across his arched nose directly on one point.

"Then you have studied literary Bluehose since you married amongst us, Mrs. Van Blancken?"

"Ah, it is too pretentious, too precise, above all, too supercilious. It wearies one to observe it long, so I have only a few impressions of it. You know that I think the most perfect wisdom is yours, to know how to be entertaining!"

Her eyes, of a fickle and luminous blue, changing forever with her variable moods, glanced up into his with a mischievous and arch look. He acknowledged her adroit touch on the nerve of vanity, which remains susceptible after all others, by drawing himself from his negligent attitude and making her a princely bow.

"And yet—and yet—it is amusing: as long as one is human one can find amusement in ridicule—"

"And feminine," interpolated Hartshorn, going back a phrase.

Caprice gave a turn of the head irresistible coupled with her delicate and impertinent smile.

"When one is a woman one can put a point on things that few men have sleight-of-hand to imitate. I say, one can find amusement in ridicule, and Bluehose becomes sometimes forcibly diverting. They assume to voice the opinions of the universe! The 'cultured' elements mentally differ from humanity in general as the mantis does from the grasshopper; not in size, strength, or understanding, but in eccentricity of *pose*. You see a mantis standing on a

leaf with all the solemnity and self-importance of a full-lawned bishop preaching a Lenten sermon on Purgatory!"

"Mrs. Van Blancken, you will remember that the mantis does not perceive himself as ludicrous?"

"Ah, there is a complacent and prejudiced mediocrity which defies the *éclaircissements* of satire. I see: the mantis is a simple-hearted mite—he affects nothing and does what nature bids him; in the face of the sun he plays archbishop, not knowing that the sun is laughing at him. Next time I need a simile there I will not use the mantis; I ask his pardon; in the comparison I have maligned him!"

These inveterate talkers, whose lives one might call perpetual *jeux d'esprit*, were too absorbed in their *repartee* to perceive the attention drawn to Gladys and Sidney as they entered.

They pursued to its end their vein of thought, and the young man who stood by, hearing the conversation, grew very restive covertly. He listened to the talk, and gazed with large moony eyes towards Caprice, seeking to comprehend the phrases accompanied by her charming gestures and rendered piquant by the peculiar and delicate inflections of her caressing feminine voice, which, as it were, illustrated the intentions of her words. He looked with envy at the easy *pose* of Hartshorn, whose appearance is marked by an indefinable but striking aristocratic finish, and felt curiously sore as he heard with understanding the words:

"I think the most perfect art is yours—to know to be entertaining."

At this moment he saw the calm and radiant figure of Gladys touched with the flame of the opals on her breast and in her hair. He looked at her fixedly, his

lips hanging apart, and then turned his gaze on the coquettish and exquisite daintiness of Van Blancken's wife. The poor fellow had a wild stutter that caught him up at every sentence: in fact, he stuttered in his thoughts.

"Ah-h-h! regular angel, I thwear! Th'other—" he cast on her the jealous glare of his large and moony eyes. "Tonfounded artful, fetching lill' devil. Can't get around her, and can't get 'way from her. Thuch women as she beat f'ler out of his boots—I do thwear thath tho!"

He was the heir of seven millions of dollars, which his father at present kept a grip on, however. His large blue eyes, set far apart, and large straight nose; his uncertain mouth, and weak jaw which was planted with excellent teeth, gave one the idea that his features had been purchased singly, promiscuously, from a wax works. His name was Wallace Toller.

"Find amuthement in ridicule!" he echoed, with a fiery mixture of defiance with despondency. "Yeth, juth' like her! Beat a f'ler out of his boots, to be thure, and laugh at him afterwards!" After this reflection he glanced around the room with the shadow of an idea on his face. His eyes rested on Van Blancken, who was talking with Gerard.

"I'm tonfounded fool, and she's tonfounded lill' tormentor. I do thwear thath' tho'!—Don't think th' other would be."

He ruminated again, casting an eye darkly at Caprice. He could neither understand her unscrupulous attack, nor take comfort thinking she meant its phrases for his ears; he perceived her complete and vivacious indifference, and finding himself neither flattered nor informed, matured plans for present secession.

"Van Blancken would do it, thure he would. Kind old boy, Van, 'therves a wife with a heart!" Then he drew himself straightly up, erected his collar, and prepared to march, when his eye fell on Gerard, who was stepping within the high French window.

"That f'ler with him? Tonfound it all! Can't ask Van before him!" Toller's lips fell apart again. "Go near him be worse th'n stoppin' here. Got the manners of a thnapping-turtle. I 'thwear thath so."

Toller had once put himself in the way of Gerard's wit, which was cruel. Since then he had kept off from him.

"Well, have to wait. 'Fernal f'ler—juth like him, I thwear. Give m' ears, true as live, to be theen dancing the cotillion with her."

He stood, dividing his regards between the two men across the room and Gladys. An occasional dark glare reached Hartshorn and Caprice; these had abandoned the topic of Bluehose, and had gathered a part of their coterie about them, forming a vivacious circle to the envy of Toller, whose jealousy was goaded hard.

After one of these roundabout looks he dropped his eyes on his large hands, carefully buttoned in their kids. He gave a sigh of concentrated disgust, mingled with weariness.

"Thuch a lovely lill' fetching creature, and never would care if I cut m' throat or father burst up t'-morrow. Couldn't make her. . . . Wonder if she would have if I didn't 'thammer? O Lord!—wish I wasn't so tonfounded foolish all round!"

He turned himself about from sheer impatience, with a sentiment noble when compared with many one hears on the lips of one's juniors. In doing so he per-

ceived that Gerard had made his way to the chair of Gladys.

* * * * * * * * *

Mrs. Varian was chatting to a fine looking woman of thirty-six, robed in rich garnet hues, which threw up the sparkling bright blue of her eyes, and restored to her skin that whiteness whose perfection the last ten years had dimmed. Her mouth was large and hard; one could detect, passing the corners, a distinct slight line very significant. The cast of face was strong and defiant; in her brilliant, watchful and restless eyes were the fires of unsatisfied and galled ambition.

"Do you expect your husband to-night, Mrs. Varian?" she was saying. Mrs. Varian lifted her sweet fringed eyes and met the cold glitter of her questioner's hard ones.

"I cannot tell. He has been in his study all this afternoon, watching the wires from New York. It is possible he may come; but his operations always engross him more than our diversions do."

"It is probable," said the other, with a smile. She had strong even teeth, and her wide lips displayed them; there was always a possible cruelty in her smile. "Mr. Van Steen is to have some information from your husband, I hear, which will take him to town to-morrow. He is interested with him, he says. If Mr. Varian would only give him a little of his luck as well—he has had such reverses lately! And your husband is such an able man: he always has the knack of floating the most discouraging enterprise with perfect success."

She spoke with cordiality, turning to move away with a certain tiger-like and haughty grace of carriage as she finished. Mrs. Varian smiled in her eyes.

"Yes, and there are so very few men and women who make successes of their lives!"

Mrs. Varian's lips retained their smile when the *houish* of the garnet silks was lost to her ears, and the moment of reprisal to her thoughts.

In her mind rose the impression of that sanctum where her husband sat watching the ticker from New York. Above the sounds of the ball-room vibrated the click of the wire with a message coming in. There were leaky ventures along with sound ones in Mr. Varian's calculations. To his wife's ears, the telegraph's quiver and rap suggested a sinister voice whose speeches were perpetually menacing in their unintelligible succession; in fact, it resembled the voice of a mocking fate, commenting with ironical foreboding on her husband's complicated and audacious operations. Now and then of the gold that passed through his hands, Mr. Varian, careless in his opulence, would spill some. Then the telegraph sounded more busy, its rapid jar and hurry more imbued with ironical importance. Mrs. Varian in listening to its sound on recalling it, unconsciously strained her intelligence to interpret the dispatch arriving. Amongst the innumerable ventures some might terminate in disaster; amongst the innumerable messages one might bring the news of a catastrophe.

Van Blancken seldom joined the circle round his wife; he admired Caprice with a hearty pride of possession which was tinged with indefinable mental humility. He thought her "good form," all through, like a blooded trotting filly, but her intrepid wit; her subtle tact; her perfect and alluring daintiness; her fickle moments of tenderness, swift as the touches of a moth's wing, infused with the charm of quickly pass-

ing which made them sought again; above all her supreme mutability, the attraction which a man usually recognizes longest in a woman; enchained Van Blancken with a second impression, of an organization more subtle, more brilliant and more baffling in its delicate variations, than his mind could comprehend or his will control, and this gave her, for him, a potent provocation which she had too fine tact to diminish.

After Gerard had left him, he watched her across the room for a time, and then, moving to get some champagne, fell in with Hugo Van Steen.

"Well, Hugo, my dear fellow, has three days of Newport set you up again? Can't you stay with us a couple more, instead of going back to the Street to-morrow?"

Van Steen's eyes lighted with a characteristic broad flash, and he smiled. He was a man of strong and nervous physique with sinuous and slender hands and an imperious mouth. In his face there was an expression of peculiar weariness underlain by a sort of suppressed and bitter restlessness, which showed itself in some of his moods with force. Van Steen's character contained lights and shadows strongly contrasting, tenderness with passion; he possessed fine sensibility with peculiar steadiness of nerve.

"Varian will give me some points to-night I shall use in my calculations when I reach New York. It is easier to make the sea give up its dead than the Street give back what you have lost there; but I believe in coercing fortune, and you know I usually put through my undertakings. And even though one loses, there is an absorbing interest in the chances that makes me find it worth while. . . . . It is possible to feel a certain deference for a passion that has the power to

master one. There are very few things which can make one forget."

Into his voice had swept a profound and unconscious vibration. He shut his lips with a sudden impulse and glanced at Van Blancken with the air of a man who, gradually forgetting the presence of his companion, has spoken rather from the heart than from the lips and regrets it.

Van Blancken, who knew Van Steen's past, which had been embittered by a catastrophe whose memory was yet hard with pain to him, responded with delicacy aside from the last words.

"I should think Varian had helped you rather the other way around lately, Hugo. I don't think he's in good trim himself—subject to financial fever and chills. That man has such a craze for stocks, and such an idea of three millions' bottomlessness, that I should not wonder if he collapsed one day like a pricked soap bubble. It's hard lines for his wife and daughter—true women both of them. I think he grows more incautious the bigger his schemes become."

"Yes, that don't speak for a man's brain-balance. With all the successful men on the street, their coolness and resource have grown with their responsibilities."

Van Steen had resumed his usual tone of indifference with weariness, under which there vibrated seldom the sound of a ceaseless unrest. He seemed to have forgotten the feeling of a moment which he had shown and recommended with interest and force:

"It is not the gain alone that fascinates a man in speculation. There is more in watching the combinations, in the everlasting change, in the everlasting haste; in the incessant conflict of brains which are

each revolving an infinity of schemes, and determined to outwit each other's acuteness. Call it gambling, it has the intricacy of chess to redeem the uncertainty of poker. There is something in it that arrests a man, that overcomes him and grows upon him, retaining him amongst the surroundings as firmly as an electric bar keeps the hands upon it whilst the shock is being given. The seniors could not retire from their habitual places in it without feeling, most of them, a sort of paralysis, owing to cessation of the subtle, incessant, demanding brain work, which is to some minds a stimulus as necessary as Toller's cocktail, there, is to him before his breakfast."

Van Blancken cast his eye amusedly at Toller, who was floating uneasily without an object. Then he turned with spirit toward Van Steen.

"I tell you what, Hugo, I'll bet there are some women who would enjoy all that pretty keenly. Female stenographers and typewriters are recognized and make themselves useful enough, but women brokers are an unknown quantity. I'd like to see one of them trying to boss an office and run a ticker!"

"I have," responded Van Steen, briefly.

"Ah—h?" said Van Blancken at this, with an uncertain accent, mainly of surprise.

"I am not joking you, Van Blancken. We have a little broker down in the street, who runs her separate office and wires, has every stock's price asked and bid to closing in her brain, and wears a neat fitting tailor-suit as light and appropriate as our business clothes. She does irregular lobby-work for one of the big men, and gathers some odd thousands from the private points he helps her to in return for her diplomacy. She has keen intelligence, excellent toilettes, and the

slang of a dispatch boy. She calls all the men down there 'old fellow,' and has most of them at her beckon; they know her value in the game. She is as generous as a trooper in luck, and keeps her money circulating like the wine at a champagne supper. Very few women can work as hard, if they spend as easily, as this one. She is a feature of the market and knows as much as any capitalist. In fact, she helps herself on by being of use to the capitalists, and receiving private indications by which she accomplishes large *coups*. She finds it the life for her, and stays by business like the best man in Wall street, but takes every chance of closing a private transaction over a well-ordered luncheon with champagne. She tires herself and goes up town early, but you see her in Greme's box at night, and very likely his face behind her for half an hour of it, like a discolored mask of Mephistopheles. It is amusing to get at the true feminine creature under the woman of business. Half of her mind is given to the ticker and the other part to her toilettes."

"Well, Van Steen, my dear boy, I'm enlightened!"

"Every woman is a peculiar study in herself; this one, owing to her surroundings, is more peculiar than some others. She has, above all her inequalities, the generous impulses of a good heart, and an impulse is rare amongst hearts whose chords are tuned to respond to the sounding of gold coin. To very many of our women a bank-book would suggest more thoughts than their hearts could, or their minds."

"Well, Hugo, keep your ideas if you want to. My wife's the only one I'd swear to amongst them all, but then that's as it should be and not surprising.

There's a woman I know of over there in a wine-colored gown, along with that little creature that has black hair in a bang on her forehead; she heard gold coin jingle and jumped for it, but she found she'd been in too much of a hurry. Old Marston's wife, down town —daresay you don't know him—isn't on the Street—but when they settled down coolly afterwards she found she'd been too witty to begin with. Thought she could have handled his money, and given entertainments to startle Crœsus, but she found the old man liked to know the feel of his purse-strings yet. That woman is eaten up with disappointed ambition; she affects to appreciate wit in others to secure herself a reputation for discernment, but has too little original wit to rule a society she can't get the chance of bribing!"

Van Blancken stopped and lounged more easily, showing strong white teeth under his short grey mustache.

"I very seldom say as much of any one as that, but she kicked over a young officer fellow for Marston, and I think she deserved all she got. The old man's biggest reason for keeping the money snugly under his hand is that they have a little daughter he wants to provide for more securely than her mother would be likely to do. Society is a queer mixture, Van Steen!"

"Ah, most of us don't acknowledge that. We most of us look at it through its own accommodating spectacles of gold—and gold has embodied the supreme deity since Jupiter and Danaë's time."

Van Blancken nodded his head with vagueness.

"I never was very confoundly up on Greek myths, Hugo; you must get some other fellow to apply that."

He brushed from his mustache some flecks of

champagne foam. They had left the ball-room and were standing at the buffet.

Mrs. Marston had more wit in her own estimation than Van Blancken had credited to her. It was of direct aggressive quality, touched with the fierceness which veined her nature. At the moment Van Blancken observed her she had fastened her hard and brilliant eyes on a celebrated *parure* of emeralds arranged on their owner, whose toilette was combined and tinted to enhance them.

"One of our leading society women," commented Mrs. Marston tersely. "People shouldn't wear superb stones when the only effect they can achieve with them on is to suggest an Indian idol in full-dress to every one in the room. Perhaps she sees the resemblance, thinks it appropriate, ha! ha! Personally she is one of our least interesting idols; I suppose she follows the fashion where the jeweled Dagons come from, that the uglier an idol is the more Koh-i-noörs he must wear!"

The hostess had projected a cotillion in which were chosen to dance the most beautiful and graceful *débutantes* of the year. This was to be the signal dance of the night, the culmination of the *fête*. It was under the direction of a gentleman whose life was combined of leading germans irreproachably and handling a fine coaching-team.

When the figure commenced all those outside the dance rested their attention on it with a peculiar effect. A light silence had fallen, only broken by the accordant music of the band, which seemed to compell by its subtle *entrain* the graceful intricacies of the succeeding movements. The robes of the *débutantes*, with whom lay the fascination of the dance, were in faint tints designedly and exquisitely blending, heliotrope,

rose, soft amber, silver and green. The veiled silks of Gladys, with a warm light like the tints of her flesh, made a luminous center in the changing of the harmonious dance. There was a charm in the hour, in the scene, in the atmosphere of the time as it passed. Something in the rhythm of movements, of music, in the beauty of the dancers, soothed in alluring; there is very much dissonance in life, and the mind receives an impression of perfected harmony like a suggestion of rest.

Mrs. Varian and Mrs. Oriarte watched their daughters, as they sat together. Mrs. Oriarte felt a mingled agitation of pride, of memory, of tenderness; she played softly with the lace-covered fan on her knee, not unfolding it, with her eyes on Sidney. She prattled in a low voice full of quaint heartfelt inflections; there was an innocent earnest *naïveté* in her thoughts as they rose with the moments which passed.

"Look at her! She is so happy. It is sweet for a girl to be so young and so loved, and so unspoiled, like a flower with the dews on it. She is all that, and it will last in her. It is marriage which takes all the freshness from a young creature that is like the best of its life; nothing else can do it as quickly, and when it is done nothing can ever help it. It is my greatest happiness that I shall give her to Cariston. I know he will hold her life sacred and beloved. He is her partner in the dance. . . . . I remember twenty years ago how her father and I danced together."

Her voice trembled a little, she seemed to see not the figures before her, but those other figures in the old german which to all but her lay in the forgotten past. She was subdued; a strange spirit of quiet stole over her like the breath of a slow wind; across the hasten-

ing present had fallen the shadow of an old flown year that she had loved.

It is notable to those who observe the eccentric as well as the ostentatious in society, that there are three aged gentlemen, past swimming, who float on the surface of all balls, diving later with force into the supper, and boast with bluffness of having attended more germans than Lander ever tuned up for. These three unaccountable assorted entities were never observed to be severally content till after they had sopped the inward Cerberus with material indications of the supper *ménu*.

At the time they stood in rank together, formidable and very grim—this dance, which for ancient reputation they must witness, was alone between them and the works of a fine *chef*.

"They look like paradise-birds and crows. A capital comparison, but not a capital effect. There is something more crude in our young men's evening dress than there is in the blending of an ordinary sauce."

This was the speech of the leading antiquity who favored the grace of his grandfather's sword and full ruffles when he came to think of anything less than sauce.

"A comfort," interposed the second, "to remember that if we don't have the pleasure (though exertion) of dancing with these charming young creatures, we looked in the eyes of their aunts and mothers at least more distinguished than these young men in theirs."

Here he smiled with complacency, he liked to tickle his elderly conceit as his friend liked to tickle the actual palate.

The third rejoined with business-like incisiveness:

"I'm not so sure, my dear sir. The human being is forever the same—that is forever unaccountable—but in every generation the world thinks an improvement has occurred in the make of spectacles and is sure it can see better than before in consequence. Everything alters under the new glasses, and everything seen through the old appears obliquely. One don't like to have a cast in one's eye that will double the image of the woman one adores, and no more does humanity care to look back at things seen when spectacles had poor glasses in them!"

The Rosebud cotillion had reached its final figure, its most effective combinations, its most dainty perfection of blending grace. The hostess sat beside the Idol of the Emeralds, congratulating Hartshorn, whose original mind had created the idea. The last figure was closing, seeming to lull with the soft-stringed music into the finale of repose.

The dance had ceased: a single zither breathed out its long last chord. There was silence.

A moment passed; the ball-room became full of murmuring animation like a theatre after the drop-scene is down.

"Bewitching!" said Caprice, with her fickle smile, glancing into the eyes of Van Blancken.

"Yes, done in thorough good style; no vulgar hurry about it. You always know when a thing is as it should be, Lillian! plenty of women don't."

"Ah! you forget there is but one Caprice!" responded his wife with inimitable provocation.

"And you know I'd sooner have you—to laugh at me—than have Maud S. in my stables, Caprice."

"It is true. And when you are ridiculous I find you adorable, Belmont, because then you amuse me most!"

She shrugged lightly one of her charming shoulders, with a little smile winning and swift as a sungleam. On the narrow band of the sleeve perched a miniature wren in gold, of exquisite finish; a tiny, mocking, dainty thing which she always wore about her at once as talisman and emblem. Her brilliant and singular beauty was enhanced by the color of her toilette; of velvets, dim as a sea-depth and fainting to silver through subtle elusive green. A glistening deep web of threaded crystal beads swept across the front in a draped fall; crystal figures enriched and finished the dress with inimitable effect, and about her throat in a rare setting of old silver clung the pale mysterious gems of the moonstone, whose faint lustre showed in the gold-flecked bronze of her hair.

When Gerard had, in the sight of Toller, left Van Blancken and found his way to Gladys, he was full of mingled and indefinable impressions which would have baffled the two men who watched him, had his mind been before them instead of his figure. As he greeted her Gladys met his eyes with a momentary intense look, swift, yet subtly lingering. He perceived the opal-clasped orchids on her breast; his eyes threw out a peculiar hard light as they rested on the curving shoulder and the flowers. He felt with warmth the charm of her beauty which had the repose of the marble with the sentient perfection of life; he concealed a dominant sensation of self-distrust which, mingled with uncertainty and thoughts at odds, gave him acute perplexity.

"Will you give me the waltz which follows the cotillion? I ask early to make it certain, Miss Varian."

She glanced down her card without haste. He watched her nearly with intangible uneasiness.

"The waltz which follows the cotillion? Yes. Then you will be my partner through both."

She raised her eyes to his again. The vividness of her inward feelings seemed to blind her materially. She saw his dark eyes bent into hers and above them the lights of the ball-room became intense and wavered like an atmosphere of flame.

He thought with his eyes on her deep pupils, which broadened, suffusing the iris.

"How will she take what I shall tell her in the waltz?"

He approached her seldom during the evening until they joined in the cotillion. Gladys merged the knowledge of his absence into a pervading and absorbing thought, of the possibilities of the single waltz which he had asked with his eyes on hers. One of the most admired *débutantes* of the year, she was surrounded continually; a perpetually changing group was about her, she appeared in the climax of her beauty and supremacy. A peculiar animation had touched her, like a hidden fire suffusing the calm of her beauty: her expression altered with infinite variation as subtle as the changing of her opals' shine. She sustained with inimitable charm her attraction: she thought, was not the time hastening till they should meet? A sort of desire, an electric emotion, seemed to spur the moments and drive them before her, dispersing with swiftness while hope led her on. An exquisite hope, tender, absorbent, full with ardent life, imbued with the force of a strong nature and a profound emotion. While the circle about her acknowledged her rare charm, she kept in her heart a thought which she caressed, as a child does a bird that, caught, is soothed and trembles more seldom; a thought that she con-

cealed with an intangible sweet shame; the thought of the happiness which hope could only show stealing with shy steps toward her life, but which, if Gerard spoke to-night, in the waltz, she might recognize, powerful, dominant, commanding, advancing to light with a great light the years of her future. She experienced an indefinable mingling of emotions, solemn, tender, or inexplicable; the hours seemed winged with the force of a single thought; anticipation, intensifying with unnumbered impulses, acquired the vehemence of pain.

In the life of Gerard a single experience had biassed irrevocably his estimation of woman. Ten years ago he had been jilted by a girl as mercenary as she was beautiful, who, perceiving even more brilliant possibilities at her hand than he then had the power of offering to her, released herself from her engagement with him, and entered Paris three months later as the bride of a returning Baron of the Bourse. Gerard was then twenty-three years old. At that age man has not lost his confidence in life; his susceptibilities have the large sensitiveness to pain peculiar to youth before experience shows that grief is a phase which passes and recurs, like the rise and fall of an emotional barometer; above all he repeats the pertinacious and invincible opinion of youth, that the sorrow, the passion, the triumph of the present are immortal. It is a subtle satire on the habitual short sight of man, that youth, with whom this is the least true, regards it as truth the most firmly. Gerard, with sensibilities naturally fine, a life untouched by disappointment behind him, an experience of life not sufficient to guide him since he had observed it with superficial attention, received the shock of his dismissal with an emotion

which shared the acuteness of all first rebuffs of confidence or passion. He possessed innate courage, the leading attribute of pure blood, and concealed with intensity of purpose and self-command the intolerable wound he felt. It was for a time with him as with others; the heat of his repulsed passion augmented itself and fed on his life which had suddenly become bare; the possibilities, the charms, the dissipations, the companionships of his existence were of no worth to him. He had permitted a dominant emotion to possess him, another personality to lay hold on his:—the emotion remained, with its quality transmuted but the personality—which he had trusted like his own and adored as a soul can only love another—become false to him, was gone from his life. What remained in that life was to him at the time like the setting which mocks one with the place of a dropped jewel.

He determined to remain in New York; he was haughtily reluctant to show the pain of his defeat. The hot passion he had felt for the woman, unsated, dwelt upon, became metamorphosed by the processes of thought. Its poignant personal interest diminished, he became more callous to the stinging memories with which the city and its society surrounded him; his regrets became less impassioned, more contemptuous, as it were, of themselves and their inspiration. The hatred blent into his repulsed passion died down, he began to perceive the woman who had deceived him was not worth more than his contempt. Gradually her constant idea became cold and seldom on his consciousness; the appetite of living returned; the wound was healed to a shut scar. However, a certain confidence, an eagerness, an indefinable youth had been removed from his life with his first disillusion.

This was replaced as time passed, which changes man with or against his will, by a coldness of feeling which was the growth of increased observation combined with the effect of his own past upon him; a latent recklessness of intention, which rendered him careless of inflicting pain since he thought with bitterness, "One's feelings should be in his own control, not another's;" and finally, an increased caution, which influenced his entire attitude of mind, and rendered less ardent every emotion with a subtle modification. In observing more keenly the society in which he moved, he became uncertain of the veritable motives of the actions he regarded; this inclined him to an habitual bias of doubt, which caused him instinctively to draw back those sensitive nerves of response which connect with the personalities of others, and to assume a mental attitude, reserved, self-centred and independent of sympathy, distrusting this as unstable and blind. The single signal rebuff at once of his confidence and passion, had suggested to him that to avoid depending on any personality beside his own was wisdom and self-defence, since he had begun to distrust the interest of others and learn that from himself alone could he command fidelity to himself. He insensibly lowered his estimation of average character; but without the poignant and spiritual disappointment of a mind of higher organization; and returning with zest to the ways of life he had found good before his decisive experience, comprehended that the less one expects of others the more secure is the poise of one's content. Certain forms of judicious egotism guide and shelter one.

Gerard had during ten years enjoyed his life. He did not permit any of his passions to approach towards

his heart; he found before him in the *divertissement* of his own society, and in the cities of Europe, an edition of life which satisfied well enough his increasing indifference. He had no desire to marry; he found an establishment without a wife entirely convenient, and lived with his elder brother, when it occurred that they were at the same time in any city.

At thirty-three years Gerard was still young, notwithstanding a certain satiety; a certain lack of vital interest in the unexplored things of life; a certain inclination rather to continue in the ways he knew than to take the trouble of finding other paths possibly of more interest to him. He was a man without an object, unless to enjoy. His father's accummulated wealth had been divided equally between his brother and himself; his share was sufficiently important to give him the concentrated power which gold ensures; however, he found no stirring motive of interest in the control of wealth; the indifference which had become part of life with him was disturbed only by a few possibilities.

The beauty of Gladys with its rare characteristic charm, had a peculiarly vivid attraction for him. Its calm at once subtly soothed and aroused him He felt a new experience of emotion. He had become so habituated to a certain reserve, and a continual evenness of emotional balance, that the genuine interest which was excited in him, mingling with passion in unguarded moments, remained sufficiently under his control for him to believe in his ability to shake it off should it become importunate and threaten his freedom. It amused him to experience a sensation which had the power to vibrate with force through his being; he was attracted towards Gladys with a feeling which

might develope to passion but had not the elements of love.

At the cotillion's finish the three aged entities showed the way briskly to the supper-room; on polite foraging expeditions it was always noted that they led the van. Amongst the tired dancers who followed them Gerard brought Gladys; these two, however, were sustained and nerved subtly by separate dominant motives of emotion, and felt the swift energies of aroused nervous force in different forms of fine excitement.

Gladys disguised the profound absorption of anticipation which increased in her; the hour of the waltz was coming near—the time had passed. It seemed to her that the minutes, like bars between him and herself, were falling, releasing with each stroke that certainty which, blending with the wavering life of her hope, would touch it with triumphant immortality She was aware of his presence by her with that intense sensibility of all the fibres of perception, which vivified by the electric impulses of roused emotion, becomes strained to an impression of pervading pain. She did not trust herself to raise her eyes; she feared with exaggerated, sensitive timidity that he might penetrate her feelings in a look. Her lips were hot: she ate a delicate ice with fevered thirst; yet the cool touch of the silver shot through her fingers a shivering, keen chill. There had been silence between them for a time: a sense of inexplicable loneliness touched her; he was so near to her life, her heart; she craved with force to appeal to his tenderness, to receive at last the undisguised response. It was the inevitable attitude of supplication, of reliance, which is assumed by the woman who feels too fully to feign, who loves too much.

He watched her; he was half aware of her agitation. Those who feel least profoundly are not seldom the most profound observers. In him also there was a certain eagerness, a certain anticipation, a certain unrest, reflecting in his eyes which glittered as they rested on her; but these were not the response which her nature, innocent of motives and impulses less pure than its own unstudied emotions, instinctively desired.

Gerard had eaten nothing, but took some Moselle, which he rated higher than champagne. The flavor and *verve* of the wine was fine; as he set down his glass, his eyes fell on the bending curve of Gladys' neck and the sensitive, calm moulding of her lips. A certain half-ironical pity touched him; he thought:

"She will suffer . . . . and yet for how long? Still, she will suffer. Such women hold the very key of pain in their own hearts——" he kept his eyes upon her, and they filled with a light subtly fierce.

"She is beautiful!—hah! and when she knows?"

At that moment she spoke to him, disguising the invincible timidity which swept over her before him, yet not so perfectly but he perceived it, and felt the power he held with a vein of delicate cruelty distinctively his own.

He answered her; in his eyes, very dark and changing, a new expression had concealed the last.

"In the conservatories it is cool," he said. "Let me take you there till our waltz?"

The orchids on her breast were trembling as she breathed. A crisis seemed to approach, paralyzing her with the magnetic force of a supreme anticipation. An intangible fear seized her, penetrating her consciousness with undefined intensity. The time had come.

The warm white of her flesh had taken on a faint

pallor; she laid her hand on his arm with a silent gesture of acquiescence.

The large eyes of Wallace Toller watched them disappear with an indescribable expression.

Toller, finding himself ignored with grace by Caprice and forestalled with Gladys, watched Gerard for a time as a rabbit might an unaccustomed rattlesnake, and then went off for some champagne.

Half an hour later he was still by the buffet, outstaying Van Blancken and Van Steen. His posture approached as near an easy lounge as the correct stiff length of his figure permitted. He was watching the bubbles spring to the surface of the wine with a lively gaze. As he talked, to a man of open manner but shifty, insinuating eye, his stammer was a trifle accelerated; his voice raised to a high, friendly key.

"Good thtuff, Pommery; I always thwear by Pommery, Ambleon! don't you?"

"Well—er—I prefer Veuve Cliquot, really fine, but one gets such peculiar variations of either brand at the handsomest tables—" he paused for a moment with habitual hesitation, and resumed with the air of arriving at his point: "You know, men often pay for wine, attractively doctored domestic material—ha! ha!"—he laughed with a certain relish—"as fine foreign brands of special vintages; don't know what is what themselves, and pay uphill for their poor connoisseurship."

Toller rejoined in a tone of unusual, aggressively derisive contempt.

"Oh—ah! Some f'lers thuch tonfounded 'fernal fools. Lots of them about ev'ywhere, don't th' know! Ca' count them, I thwear!"

The man beside him lifted his hand and caressed for

a second his neat brown mustache. He concealed with this careless gesture a smile by some degrees more vivacious than the one of suave frankness with which he returned :

" Every man can't buy a knowledge of wine at the same time as he stocks his cellar. Some men haven't the palate to acquire it, and some don't care to take the trouble ; and as for the majority, they know pretty well what they have to expect when they don't dine with professed connoisseurs, and don't educate their taste for the purpose of making it a perennial nuisance to them." He might have proceeded amiably for another five minutes, but Toller, whose eye had roved from his champagne-glass, broke in with a loud stammer :

" People ought know better th' asking f'lers o' purpose to drink bad wine. Ought know better—thwear thath so ! Can't get any fun out th' girls, thtiff as brooms—ca' talk t' any f'lers that know 'nough t' underthtand you,—howling wilderneth,—must have good wine !"

Jesse B. Hartshorn had come in with his inimitable air, and focussed Toller with his concentrative gaze across the arched bridge of his distinguished nose. He overheard the last few phrases, and drank his wine with a significant expression of the eyebrow peculiar to himself. As he turned to depart, he murmured profoundly : " One should beware of unguarded moments !"

Ambleon, skilled exceedingly in weather-signs, being one of those who have a care to conciliate and go through life with a prudential smile, perceiving the celebrated indication of dubiousness in the eyebrow of Hartshorn, which included him with his companion,

took care to retain the blandest calm, and replied, with studious moderation to Toller's expostulating outburst:

"That's so, Toller—that's so; to be sure. Still, I never trust any wines outside my own choice but Hartshorn's here, and one or two others as well up in them as he. One can be sure of his own stuff—one knows what he's going to get—in fact, there's nothing like a few dozens of fine wine, one's own choice, always ready."

"Yes, yes, had some good Chablis once; never thtopped feeling thirsty while it was there. But I don't want any more 'f that; got into m' head and made a knocked-down fool of me ev'y time."

Ambleon lifted his hand to his mustache, concluding the gesture by a cautious twist of both. He ventured a sidelong glance at Toller, whose open countenance was lightly flushed.

"A fellow I knew in the wine trade, a sort of business friend, sent me a case of uncommonly fine Pommery a month ago. I've only opened two bottles of it as yet—as I told you I don't fancy Pommery as much as Veuve. Drop in and crack a bottle and smoke, won't you, Toller, when we've got through here? I'm off to business and Wall street to-morrow, and shan't get back for probably a fortnight."

"Yeth. Pommery an'thing like this? Glorious thuff 'f it's like this, I thwear!" He drained off his glass with emphatic enthusiasm.

"Rather better, I imagine," rejoined Ambleon, with fine indifference. "But I can't make anything of it myself; I don't take to Pommery at its best."

"Thay, Ambleon, if you don't want it, juth tell us your figure, and I'll take the cathe."

"Figure, my dear fellow? Any figure that suits you. I'm always glad to do a man I like a friendly turn." Archie Ambleon waited with a benevolent smile on his face for Toller's rejoinder.

"You're 'fernal good f'ler, Ambleon! Put up your own price; go 'head! I'm not 'fraid of y' thwindling me, y' know!" he concluded hilariously.

Ambleon had arrived at that point towards which the whole conversation had been directed. His small eyes, of a brownish color, looked honestly into Wallace Toller's. He named a top price and struck the bargain, with an inimitable open smile.

Gladys passed on the arm of Gerard towards the conservatories. She felt like a cool touch in caressing the odorous breath of many flowers; the shadows and tender dimness of the place. He brought her to a low seat, beside which rose the clusters of pale large-petaled oleanders. A rich fragrance drifted from them; about them a wandering firefly idly glowed and dulled his phosphorescent lamp.

Gerard took the place beside her and watched for an instant her profile, whose pale lines, in the shadowy half light, resembled with a strange effect an exquisite marble.

He spoke to her slowly, his voice was soothing to her like the cool dimness and the pervading perfumes. She had sunk under his powerful influence upon her into a lulled and exquisite repose; she listened to the sound of his voice as one listens, dreaming, to words which seem to caress him through the sweetness of their tones. It seemed to her that the days of her life had passed on only to bring this moment.

"I wished to speak to you to-night, Miss Varian. I have to tell you something which cannot wait for a

second chance." His voice was very low, a peculiar latent light was in his eyes which fastened upon her face with intensity.

She had turned towards him in listening; as his voice ceased she felt intuitively his look upon her eyelids. Her lips parted slightly as she drew her breath; the moment of waiting seemed to arrest the beating of her heart. He commenced again.

"This opportunity would have been lost if I had been absent to-night. I should not have come but that I wished to tell you this; and it is well to speak here where we are alone." He paused again, still watching her keenly. She raised her hand from the wrist with the unconscious gesture of a poignant nervous pain. When he ceased to speak a vibration of dread touched the strung chords of her sensibilities, as a subtle quiver passes down a nerve-chord penetrated by the fine steel of the surgeon. He did not observe the slight movement of her hand; his eyes were upon her whitening lips, that trembled with the breaths which passed between them.

"This afternoon a cablegram summoned me to Paris. My brother is gravely ill. . . . I sail for France on Saturday, and leave Newport to-morrow." He ceased.

The silence seemed to close over Gladys like a calm and stifling sea. It was to her like sinking to drown; before the sight of a drowning man sweep in a sudden instant the years of his life which is ended. She saw the hopes of her love receding beyond her hold into the past.

For the first time her look went up to his: full, unguarded, undisguised. For one moment, under the words which he had spoken, she remembered only that

he was leaving her; the pain in her chilled and sickened her like the working of a deliberate poison; she lifted her eyes to his face.

He caught the glance full, in its supreme emotion. The vibrating chord in her heart struck out a false slight echo from his own. Her eyes, pathetic, appealing, seeking his face with the impulse of a goading pain, acquired for him a new aspect of beauty. He was innately cruel, and since his rejection by the woman who had commanded equally his tenderness and passion, had hardened his nature deliberately against impressions of pity or impersonal regrets. He fed his instincts of fierceness with the sight of her beauty thrilled through its calm with pain; he obtained a certain keen and unusual enjoyment without scruple. The deep appeal of her eyes, unconscious of all it revealed, aroused in him an impulse of passion, vivid and sudden, which touched him like fire. At the moment the eagerness, the anticipation, the mingled and indescribable sensations, elusive reflections of his uncertain mood, gathered to culmination.

"I shall return soon," he said, rapidly, his eyes glittering with the ardent impulse, and holding her look in their controlling gaze. "I shall return—you will remember me till then? Afterwards—"

His eyes released her; he ceased abruptly. The music of their waltz was sounding; it recalled with a swift recurrent impression his former train of thought. His habitual reserve resumed its subtly chilling influence; the sentence remained unfinished. His passion, unstable, spurred for a moment, diminished; he regained command of himself. He had almost spoken words which would have united his life with the woman's beside him. Even as he broke off he felt an

impatient impulse of regret; but her fascination for him had not yet gained dominance over his habitual caution and the self-defensive egotism of his mind.

He continued slowly, the dangerous light in his eyes subdued; a tone of fugitive caressing in his voice:

"Afterwards, we shall meet again. I hope for my brother's recovery, and that I may return with him. Then I shall resume the course of my life where it has been interrupted."

The phrases touched her as they passed with a renewed elusive inspiration of hope. The tones of his voice, in their low vibration, seemed to echo on the strung chords of her heart; she suffered more keenly, in the subtly stirring conflict of fear with a hope which grappled for life, than in the first knowledge that he was leaving her. He divined the impression created by his words; he thought, with a certain ironical disbelief in his own fidelity of remembrance: "If she has the power to retain her charm for me, till I return, she may take hold on my future. No woman before her has yet done the one or the other." He thought for an instant with weariness of his own habitual indifference to the deeper influences of other personalities. "But she is beautiful!—" as he looked at her again, swiftly sidelong, his eyes glittered with renewed keen light—"Beautiful!—Perhaps it is written that I shall remember—and she." He derided himself with light contempt as the thought passed through his brain. At the same time, it touched him with a swift fire; a thousand suggestions thronged by him after it. He perceived that an eager excitement was possessing him. Like a horse angered by an obstinate curb, he became impatient of his own impotence to throw off her pursuing influence. A re-

action occurred in him; he determined to resist it. He felt a new disdain towards himself.

"Even if one wishes to become a fool," he thought, with soreness and self-resentment, "there is no cause why he should assist himself deliberately. If this is to be done, let it be done—when I return." He expelled the train of thought with contemptuous anger; his silence had not then lasted two minutes.

He rose, and broke off a flower of the oleander. He still chafed under the stinging idea of his own irresolution.

"This is our waltz, Miss Varian; do you care to join it, or has the *fête* tired you?"

Her face was bent; as his voice reached her, she raised it quietly.

"Yes," she answered him, "I feel weary." She said it absently, without appeal to him, and rose. This was the end. She could not compel herself to look beyond their parting, beyond the time of his return; her hope had escaped her, and she felt a blind numbness of absorbing pain. He did not love her. It was all she comprehended. Beyond that, she only knew that she suffered.

They passed towards the ball-room; perfumes, mingling, drifted past them from the flowers; the firefly lingering by the odorous oleanders, still gleamed his soft spark as they went.

She had come there with a supreme hope, vital and warm as her heart's blood. As she left the dim shadows and the dreaming flowers, she felt that terrible sense of collapse which follows swiftly emotional crises; she saw in her weakness a merciless irony, since to the strength of his compassion it was forbidden her to appeal. Her hands had become cold, an imperceptible

vibration shook her limbs with a sense of nerveless feebleness; as they reached the brilliant light of the ball-room, she closed her eyes to the radiance. She felt blind.

The Manola waltz's caressing rhythm, soft as the wind's breathing, full of slumberous passion, touched her like the echo of her own emotion; swinging through the bars sung the phrases of the refrain, the great 'cello crooned it, the violins voiced it with longing, the air pulsated with it.

The haunting melody seemed to absorb her, full and deep with the tones of the viols, heavy with an unnamed pain. An imperious emotion roused in her, the agitation of a despair compelling action as its only anodyne. The voice of the melody seemed to call to her; a chord in her, wrung with pain, responded; she abandoned herself to the spell of the music. She found herself in the slow circles; his hold vibrated through her; she felt the sensuous rhythm of the dance, while the thought of his loss spurred her like flame. Yielding to the sensations which followed each other like contending winds, she seemed to drift on the tides of the music; she gave herself up to the influence of his magnetic power on her; she knew alone the force of his presence and the intolerable pain of her regret.

The refrain's deep harmonies sounded past, like the heart beat of a profound emotion; the waltz was ceasing; she comprehended that this was at last the end. As the violins blended their chords with the 'cello's, a sort of vertigo touched her; across her brain reeled a mist of fire. In a second's time she had recovered herself; her pride compelled a supreme effort to conceal from Gerard her controlling weakness. This

endeavor was the last and keenest demand on her endurance. As he led her towards her mother's chair, an unaccustomed, genuine impulse of regret touched his invincible egotism. He comprehended the pathetic struggle she made, with an indistinct sense of his own fine cruelty and a subtle impression of shame.

"Mother, I am tired; let us go home; will you send for the carriage?"

Gladys perceived that the two men were standing by the chair of Mrs. Varian. As she paused, her mother answered her request, and gracefully introduced these figures to her. One of them squeezed his tightly kidded hands together till a thumb-seam cracked sonorously. In gazing at her with his large blue eyes, he forgot all response but a buckram bow. With sudden, distracted emphasis, on accomplishing this, he succeeded in saying:

"E'chanted t'have thuch a d'lightful op'-op'tunity of knowing one 'f our motht blooming buds!"

He drew himself erect with a haughty jerk, encountering the eyes of Gerard; he felt under these a resentful uneasiness mingled with a certain triumph.

"Got 'head of the 'fernal f'ler now; didn't know me when he took me f' a fool. Needn't be a born idiot becath one thammers, y'know."

Gladys acknowledged their salutes mechanically. Mrs. Varian had risen, and the two ladies prepared to leave the ball-room.

"'Low me thee about your carriage, Mith Varian," said Toller, fervidly. "I'll hurry up. I'm afraid Mith Varian looks ton—a trifle tired." He made off with this, and Gerard rejoined:

"Permit me to see you into your brougham. I find it will be impossible for me to make any personal

adieux to-morrow. I am called to Paris by my brother's illness, and have telegraphed for passage by the French boat on Saturday. I regret that I must leave so abruptly. My last impression of Newport will be one of the best remembered."

Mrs. Varian responded appropriately and moved towards the staircase. His eyes, which had been observing Gladys with attention too guarded to be perceived, glittered as he turned away. She had not raised her look towards him since the finish of the dance. A sense of impatience stirred in him.

Toller, followed by Ambleon, had given an order for the carriage. Standing within the doors of the ballroom, he lounged as far as his stiff length permitted, with a fine, complacent air.

"Thay, Ambleon, you're a giant of a f'ler; I thwear I'm proud of us both."

Ambleon's social position was ambiguous; depending chiefly on urbane presence of mind, irreproachable evening dress, and the toleration of some female stars of magnitude in the social firmament, whom he had propitiated in commencing his career by judicious offerings of costly flowers. The countenance of these ladies, even in a dubious profile attitude, was sufficient to assure to him at first a moderate reception and success. His chief social support lay in his being the favorite henchman of the Idol of the Emeralds; financially he kept his head above water by commission and brokerage transactions. He had improved his social opportunities by that kind of tact which one observes in the searching antennæ of a prudent insect; he was a man who knew how to remain unobtrusive, a virtue in his age, and one of the minority which bring advantages beyond the proverbial reward. Under

the shadow of his opulent patroness he proceeded with habitual, hesitating tread and open smile through society; in return it thought him a good enough fellow, and forgot the occasions *sub rosâ* when he fleeced (to a decent limit) its Tollers.

"Thuperb girl! Didn't look once at that arrogant f'ler, though the thert'ly did at me when I thpoke to her. I thwear she looks like a goddess—one those things I thaw in Rome lath' year!"

"She has an uncommon style, certainly," answered Ambleon, with critical vapidity. "And very few of them, I should say, could fail to appreciate you, you know. By the way, you complimented her prettily."

"Ah-h! That f'ler Gerard was thtaring at me like dam' man-eating shark—almotht took my breath' 'way, I thwear. Glad I turned it appositely."

At this moment he perceived Mrs. Varian and Gladys descending the staircase. He abruptly abandoned his place by the door and advanced with hasty long strides towards them. Ambleon kept judiciously in the background; his small brown eyes watched twinkling. He had a harmlessly appreciative humor.

"Regret that Mith Varian theems so f'tigued," said Toller, preparing his opportunity with the skill of a native Irishman. "Hope you'll p'mit me to call and inquire after her thometime t'morrow."

Mrs. Varian acquiesced with grace, but did not delay in proceeding to her carriage: she perceived by intuition that this remark was distasteful to her daughter Gladys, resolved to conceal from Gerard every indication of her feeling, shrank keenly under this allusion which would suggest so much to his mind.

He had joined them in silence, and regarded Toller with infinite irony. Gladys passed calmly beside her

mother; he watched the pale lines of her profile which had assumed an expression haughty and serene. The stammerer could not evoke from her even the encouragement of a look; she succeeded in maintaining calm, but the masquerade of hollow customary courtesies passed by her like the dumb fret of a dream.

Gerard remained silent.

From shining brazen caldrons rose at intervals full-blossoming oleanders. Their heavy odor came to Glanys like a tangible reminder: a poignant memory touched her with the perfume; the firm curve of her lips parted a breath and closed again. She nerved herself keenly; she remembered that this was near the end; she compelled herself to new composure. Her eyes, brilliant with unnatural inward light, looked haggard in her face's pallor. She looked before her intensely as she went: the penetrating odor of the flowers stifled her.

At the broad entrance steps the night-wind, subtly chilled, swept past her and on. She gathered her cloak nearer about her; she was already cold with that cold which seems to strike across the heart.

Toller, elevated with success, which got to his head like his good Chablis, retained a cunning worthy of Ambleon; he prosecuted a far-sighted policy by reserving his best attention *pro tem.* for Mrs. Varian. He mixed with ecstacy at his progress, an inflated idea o triumph, and interpreted the silence of Gerard as a reliable sign of his defeat. Ambleon divined this with ease, and continued to observe the comedy astutely.

Toller, infatuated with his sense of "leaving that fool f'ler laps behind," strode forward enterprisingly to hand the ladies into their brougham. At the instant Mrs. Varian let fall her fan. Toller darted back

to recover it, and having restored it with disjointed deference, confronted Gerard at the carriage-step.

"By th' Lord Harry!" gasped the long stammerer, and fell back a pace aghast. "What 'founded—'fernal —c'lossal nerve!"

"This will be my last chance of saying farewell, Mrs. Varian," said Gerard. He had assisted the elder lady to enter, and turned to Gladys. The lights of the entrance fell on his face. He spoke to her.

"Good bye."

Her hand met his; at last she raised her eyes. His touch had vanquished her. She looked into his face:

"Good bye."

In that moment she thought: "It is the end, and he has never loved me. O God, how to endure!"

CHAPTER III.

AROUND WALL STREET.

AN orange-painted car trolled down Broadway full of fares, and turned Fourteenth street corner with a spin that dizzied half the men holding on to the straps till it had passed Grace Church. The morning was hot, but a draught of wind flowed through the car from the round speed it was making, and flickered the newspaper sheets of the business men bound down town as they turned them. Van Steen had boarded the car above Twenty-third street and secured a seat; it was the day succeeding his return from Newport, and he recognized with a certain renewed pleasure of roused anticipation the quarter of the city where commerce is omnipotent, where the broad thoroughfare is shadowed by heights of architecture which flank it; and where, in the deep aorta of the city, the blood flows with a powerful current, unlike the faint impulse of vitality in the fashionable uptown quarter.

The car was full and did not stop; an elderly woman in a home-made bonnet was left on Canal street crossing fretting at the unsuccessful patrolman who had undertaken to have her board it. This was perhaps one of that species of unmarried and widowed females who, enjoying a moderate competence, are bitten deep with Wall street gold fever, and under the guidance of enterprising and engaging-mannered young brokers, become thoroughly instructed in the most reliable

methods of emptying their purses on a margin. These simple souls live, for the most part, in boarding-houses on the old hash plan; have passed the middle years of life, and take their little ventures on a margin as a sort of unimpeachable cocktails.

The car hummed along down the track with impetus; the driver, a sound-lunged Irishman, shouted out to a truck to get off the line. The colored Jehu lurched around on his seat, and yelled at the pursuer as he lumbered out of way.

"Yo' monkey-faced trash, what yo' five cent dude fares wuff by dese boss 'holsteries I'se a dribing? Sho! G'home to Shantytown!"

"Ye crass-brid son av a black-faced mule, and whin I come up to yez, by auld Sint Patrick, I'll be apt to thrash the hoofs aff ye. Five cent doods did I hear ye saying? An' how can yiz tell Jay Gould's nat aboord?"

The sun's rays struck down on the pavements and roofs, penetrating to the city's beds of stone which retain the heats of Summer, and keep a perpetual steaming substratum under it. Van Steen glanced off his New York *Herald*. A thought had crossed his brain as he read the heading, "Newport Notes." His imagination was uncommonly vivid when roused; abruptly a woman's figure, its curves throwing off a faint glow from the silk stuffs clinging to it, came before his mind's sight; he forgot for a second his surroundings and the time.

"That girl is a child yet; she does not know she has a heart. It will not last long, and when she changes, Cariston has got to suffer. He has not had the power to awaken her: some other will."

Van Steen reflected briefly; he recalled the deeply

soft magnetic eyes of Cariston's betrothed. "Some other will." He had a profounder experience of life than the man of whom he was thinking; he seized in the last phrase one of those possibilities which the other's nature had not suspected.

He resumed his paper, his mind was full of shifting interests, anticipations which inspired him with some of the eager stress of ambition, the fascination, arbitrary and irresistible, in whose fever he absorbed himself, on whose dominant stimulus he relied to fill the restless emptiness of a life which had become weary to him.

The car ran into City Hall Square, where the leaves were quivering and glinting, and a few loafers drowsed on benches in the shade. Men passed briskly along the stone paths towards different points of the great business quarter which lay around that nucleus; the west sidewalk of Broadway was stirring with contingents of workers hard pressed for time. Messenger boys from the big Western Union block swung along at a good pace; a young poet leapt off the car at Park Place, and climbed with the light agility of hope that long steep stair stretching high up into darkness, which leads to the editorial fastness of a popular illustrated weekly. This time-worn stair, with a dank metal rail leading up on one side like the length of a dead grey serpent, became glorified presently into the gilded ascent of a modified Parnassus. The poet rushed down three steps at a stride, a dirty ten-dollar bill in his vest, a Shakespearian future in his eye. He dashed into the ruffled waist-coat of an old and reliable contributor by the way; however, this was a natural consequence; we all know that in the world the newest success lifts its chin the highest in the air.

There was a blockade by the down-town corner of Park Place and Broadway; Van Steen had gotten through his paper, and turned to watch the progress of affairs. The car was on the skirt of the jam and a swirl of life was circulating about it. From the two important intersecting thoroughfares poured still their crowds of pedestrian travel; successive vehicles arrived; a yellow car backed the orange on the line, men craned their heads from both; sturdy patrolmen, whose airy summer helmets gleamed white above the jostling crowd, sought to assist across the few alarmed women drifting unprotected. Van Steen's eyes, set in like the eyes of a hawk, ranged with a sombre flash across the tumultuous waves of life breaking about him. The intense light of the August sun was on them and struck in vivid effects on the color-touches amongst them; superficially, this was a restless, careless world of active animation. The drivers of hacks, cars, trucks, vans, express-wagons, bawled at each other like leading trombones; that of a black-and-tan cab undertook to hurry the rest like a game fox-terrier; men skurried under the horses' throats and ran agile risks to get across the street; the tide of commerce and business activity, stemmed for a moment, formed a species of whirlpool. Van Steen watched with a certain gloom the innumerable elements of the scene. He thought:

"This is the surface. And underneath?"

A sharp cry broke out close by him, caught and overborne by the thousand tumults of the street. He saw a woman's face beyond the powerful shoulders of advancing dray-horses; the driver, cursing the beasts, goaded on; the face, with agonized eyes and lips, flashed out of sight—she was down.

Van Steen, struck through with horror, sprang to the steps of the stopped car and out. The dray, loaded with casks, was thundering away towards the north; at the wheels of the car behind his own lay a woman's figure, cast there in a ghastly helpless whiteness that might be death. Shouting to the advancing vehicles to halt, Van Steen with strength and tenderness lifted her from the stones and regained the car.

"Make room, there, and I will lay her along the seats. Summon an ambulance."

Van Steen's low-spoken orders found that obedience which is rendered in every exigency to the will of a dominant personality.

The woman's weight was light on his arms; he felt in her that nerveless inertness of the body which suggests the powerlessness of death; a strong horror was on him as he lowered her to the level seats. A wrap was found and huddled into a sort of support under her head; as the arms of Van Steen relinquished her she made a broken moan, gasping, and struggled to utter something. Amongst the passengers, who had forgotten the block, ran an electric impulse of relief: "She is alive!"

She wore a dress of dark, poor stuff; there was a worn gold ring on her wedding-hand; her face and lips were white, and her eyes held a look of haggard and intense anxiety. She was young, and had once had the beauty of youth; the pain of her life had sunk this in a silent, unconscious pathos of expression, that burned in the imploring eyes which demanded that which she could not speak. She sought to articulate again; the appeal of her look was full on Van Steen; he bent towards her lips.

"My husband—O, my husband! . . . I am dying—I feel the blood is choking me—my husband!"

She reached her hand blindly to her breast; her eyelids dropped over the weary eyes; the breath passed her lips in struggling, faint gasps.

"Ah, Jim, when you drove me from you to-day you didn't know you sent me to my death . . . . Jim, come back to me; oh, come back! I'll forget it all—it was the first blow you ever struck me, and we loved each other once . . . . O, dear God, the pain, the pain! . . . . My husband!"

Van Steen had heard; his lips were become as white as the lips of the woman. He controlled himself strongly, and spoke to her.

"Tell me his name, and the number of your home, my poor girl. He shall be sent to you."

Her eyes were full of a wild light; she whispered between her broken breaths, and her fingers, clutching and closing at her breast, had a faint, cold, bluish tint.

"My home—he'll not be there . . . . He is with her! with her! with her!—Once he was mine—ah, Jim, the old days that we passed together—if you remembered—you—might—come here to me before I die . . . . Husband!—husband!—he will not hear!—I—oh, to see him once!"

Van Steen rose on his feet, and reeled a step. He steadied himself by the woodwork of the car.

"There is no help for this," he said. "Death will be kind to her."

Suddenly, the woman struggled to rise up, stretching out her arms; her dimming eyes grew bright with tears and the light of a great joy.

"I see him," she said, "he is coming back to me. . . O, Jim!—O, husband!"

The rapid clang of the ambulance bell approached, passing through the dispersing blockade. Men came to lift the woman into the hospital van; one paused, and looked, and turned to his comrade.

"She's dead. This will be a case for the Morgue, I guess."

Van Steen's steadiness of nerve was taxed beyond his strength. He glanced around him once—at the passengers' faces who had fallen back a step, with their eager and various expressions; at the stolid officers standing, their indifferent eyes upon her; and last, at the face of the woman, averted, where death had brought back the smile of her lost youth. A stillness had fallen there, but around surged the roar of the unceasing tongues of the city. He turned abruptly and left the place.

"And this is the end . . . . A love to outwear time and eternity . . . . And this is the end!"

The jam had given place to thoroughfare; the August sun had advanced by a degree; cars hummed down the line in prompt succession; the idle wind in the trees of the square shifted the leaves. Another was added to the Unknown Dead, and the full pulse of life beat on.

Rumors flew thicker than usual on the Street. The market was on the rise; mining shares and railroads were booming; the heavy traders played ten-pins with big balls, and the small fry gambled on the chances.

There were rumors of a pool formed by Greme and Otterdorff. Varian was said to be the third in this scheme; there were rumors that the Excelsior mine was unable to pay its September dividend—this affected the stock's popularity, and its price was falling per-

sistently; there was a rumor that a syndicate of railway magnates had bought up the interest of Ottawa Central, and formed a plan of consolidating it with Halifax and North Eastern.

On the strength of these rumors, and the bulls' activity, the street was buzzing like a hive; the news ran through it like a message down the telephone, when Greme, having left his son at Newport, playing polo with other young green shoots of Fortune's aristocracy, stepped from his private cab into his office. On the strength of these rumors and others, Archie Ambleon made some successful operations in his own and his clients' interests; and got out of Excelsior early in the decline, by unloading on an Englishman "doing" the street, at a profit. "One don't so much mind spoiling the Egyptians from the other side of the water," thought Ambleon, salving his conscience blandly, "when one recalls their endeavors to put us on a par with the chosen people." Again on the strength of these rumors, and of a thousand which drifted up and mingled with them as smoke-films from the factories do with fog-films off the river, the smaller stocks advanced rank and file; there was a great hustling amongst the petty traders, the amateur gamblers, and the shorts, and these last made a prudent scrimmage to cover, with the motto, "Devil take the hindmost."

Ten minutes before Greme arrived, Ambleon had a message in cipher brought him: "Buy and hold ——,000 shares of Excelsior." Half an hour after Greme entered Wall street, fresh rumors were afloat. Excelsior was steadily creeping up the price-ladder by a point or two at a time; it was said there had been news from the mine; the stock still advanced signifi-

cautiously; at noon it passed the highest previous point, and capped a victorious climax. Information was current that the Excelsior mine had struck a new vein of silver ore. The September dividend was considered a certainty.

Half past twelve. Steam whistles resounded through the city, giving tongue like a chorus of brazen lunged Titans. Wall street lulled for awhile. The successful men, gladdened by valuable *coups*, took luncheon leisurely, with cool Niagaras of claret and soda water; the unsuccessful, feverish, fagged and harassed, took to unwarier drinks, and talked the "long" and "short" of things over short whiskies and long champagnes.

Greme had a neat private luncheon served which he ate *vis-á-vis* with the little Winskouper; the contrast of his physiognomy, saturnine, sallow, and hers, under an Henri Quatre hat, a pretty little cat's face with pale, quick eyes, and an insolent wide smile, was subtly modified by the keen intelligence, the lines of latent eagerness, the vigilant eyes of both.

"It seems you followed up my suggestions; I can generally depend on you!" Greme said, low, between his lips, and showing an aspect of guarded triumph. "Ambleon bought his shares in different separate lots, through separate agents, and between us we have the market under our thumb—under our thumb."

Greme's rigid Mephistophelian mask acquired a sinister animation by the new keen glitter of his look; he tapped lean, nervous thumbs upon the table with rapid emphasis. She kept a careless posture at her ease and sipped some Piper Heidsieck.

"It was friendly in you to send me the points as early as you did, Mr. Greme," she answered, giving

him a recognized designation in deference to his magnateship. "I made two thousand on a straight run —of my own. I don't mind how much I fool the market to squeeze out that lot of cash!"

She laughed, throwing up an impertinent chin, and showing a fetching dimple in her cheek, while she met with her sparkling, pale cat's eyes, the triumphant eyes of Greme.

"You deserved it. You are a clever trader. I would not have trusted Ambleon to put that silver rumor on the wind."

Here Greme fell upon his luncheon with that curious air of repressed nervous force, which gave to his lean face its formidable intensity.

Her characteristic smile touched the mouth of the little Winskouper, as she chewed anchovy with her elbow by her plate and her chin tilted up on her small fist.

"I expect you can trust me to help myself along, and anyone else who'll act friendly to me."

While the majority of Wall street men were feasting on satisfaction and cool drinks, there were certain ill-paid privates in Fortune's army whose mess-table showed a meagre spread.

The Empire City Bank, a large concern, employed a number of clerks. These poor fellows had left their desks and gathered in a species of disguised sub-cellar to collect their luncheon portions of warm corned-beef with cabbage and lemonade. They had a general aspect of disillusion, far-gone failure and neglect. A weak smile passed along the line as a book-learned dyspeptic bachelor called out:

"Here's the Barmecide's feast again; where has Ambleon got to? He's usually around this table in char-

acter: always 'hob-a-nob with Death,' that is to say, always in some sort of a smash-up, or looking as if he had just gotten out of one."

"Some fellow 's always going back on Peter; or his grandma's died and left money away from him; or Total Wreck 's boomed as soon as he sold his shares; or he's got neuralgia in his ear and has to buckle to another fellow's work instead of getting a day off himself—"

The only young and ardent spirit amongst them had burst out like a scattering rocket. He was a recent arrival in the bank and still retained a degree of vitality. The older clerks of the establishment felt it pleasant, since all their waned energies were spent in gnashing on their cuts of beef, to enjoy a joker gratis.

The learned dyspeptic (who had prudently taken a pepsin powder on the tongue before commencing) continued in dogmatic snatches:

"Ambleon—is a good enough fellow, but he 's born a stick in-the-mud. To-day, now—late, as usual. I believe he sets that old machine, his watch, an hour slow to keep him in countenance: in Canada, where he floated awhile before he finally grounded here, they posted him up as 'the late Mr. Ambleon.' There's a record for you!"

A spectral mirth diffused itself about with the smell of the corned beef and cabbage. Those who had long been "grounded" also felt an indefinable Dantesque sensation:—"*Ogni speranza*," etc.

One old calculator spoke up gravely, who had looked at life till his eyes grew tired.

"Life and man are a river and a swimmer. It is a question of the strong tide or the strong arm. Some of us are weak."

"By Julius Cæsar, it'll be a question of two strong

arms and another pair of limbs with me !" shouted the youngest of the band.

"My son, you'll need to transmogrify yourself into a full-fledged Briareus, if you want to get up stream through the Empire City Bank !" the learned dyspeptic replied in solemn prophecy, regarding the youth profoundly with compassion.

A sort of murmur ran around the board, understanding and regretful, like the ghost of a Greek chorus out of tune. Then there were many gulps of lemonade. The youth succumbed.

The door of the eating-room flung open; a man of loose-limbed figure entered; his gait was shambling though he walked in eagerly; there was something ape-like in the hang of his arms and in the large bland bumps of his forehead above his small green eyes. A suave smile, indefinably self-conscious, pervaded his face, blent with hesitating triumph.

"Ah—fellows !" he called, as he advanced towards the table. "I'm in luck; I can't help being rather late to-day. Keely Motor is up, and I've made a little ready cash on my shares. It—er—gives one an appetite, I think."

"One needs a little digestive force, that's nearer my opinion. I shall soon come to living on grass and peanuts, like Nebuchednezzar and George Francis Train !" snatched out the dyspeptic, driving into the middle blandness of this speech.

Peter Ambleon had slid into his seat, and cast a cautious side glance at the other. Then he gathered well within himself, and ate in silence. He had a mental epidermis of conceit as perfect as the horse's physical epidermis; it shrank at the lightest touch of sarcasm, inattention or contempt. This was his only

sort of sensibility; it warned him through outward signs alone, not by the delicate nerves belonging to intuitively sympathatic minds.

"Say, Mr. Ambleon, how's the Street? Got to the top of the boom yet?" the youngest clerk ventured, spryly, thinking "I'll bet I strike some fun!"

Ambleon's stooping shoulders still hung above his plate; he fed himself with diligence, being a chronic third-help man. As the fine Yankee twang of his questioner cut the air like the sound of successive snapping bowstrings, Ambleon lifted a furtive eye. He thought the lad might be up to chaffing him. However, he answered with civil frankness:

"I think every important stock is—er—quite high indeed. Keely Motor, as I said, has advanced; Total Wreck is in some demand; Horn Silver has gone up from 7⅛ to 7¾; Little Chief has recovered its ground. I lost seventy dollars on Little Chief the other day," said Ambleon, expanding to his audience. "If—er—I had only held my stock a little longer—"

"'None shall triumph a whole life through,
For Death is one and the Fates are three!'"

intoned the learned dyspeptic, sepulchrally, with unction. "I hope you know those fine lines, Ambleon?"

Peter did not respond; a slight nerve-twitch played uneasily above his eyebrows; he muttered, with a hesitating semi-cough:

"Er—Byron . . . ."

"No, siree!" exclaimed the youth, "I tell you it's another fellow; a big pote, I remember, though I didn't catch on to his name, as I might have; once I read that snatch in a scrap-verse-book a class-mate had at school!"

The old man who had spoken once before, regarded these wranglers with a certain wistfulness. He had said, "Some of us are weak;" he thought: "They do not know that those lines are the epitaph of many forgotten lives."

"I was going to say," commenced Ambleon anew, feeling a sensation of intellectual thumb-screw, and seeking extrication, "Er—ah—there is a great future for Keely Motor. If—er—Keely finally can discover a method of controlling his force—" Peter spun thus far and felt a thrill of satisfied conceit; he had cloaked his ignorance from his little world; he took a pleasure in his easy subtlety. However:

"Say!" challenged the indefatigable youth with frightful energy, "I'm not agoing to let a pote's name get ahead of me. I guess our Learned Pig there, knows just what he's talking about when he grunts; so let's us guess till we get that name or lie down purple in the face. See?"

A ghastly titter ran around the board, like a new sort of exhalation from the corned beef, which, having cooled, was no longer odorous. The 'Learned Pig' liked his *sobriquet*, and shook with laughter, keeping a live grey eye on Ambleon.

"All right, youngster; get to work. You ought to name him first off, for 'big potes' are getting right scarce, I find."

"I say Rosetti!" yelled the Yankee youth; "your turn, Mr. Ambleon!"

("That was a good one," interpolated the dyspeptic, pompously. "'Next door to right,' as the aldermen say when they get up a pavement appropriation.")

"Er—ah—erghem!" hesitated Peter Ambleon, on thorns. "You must excuse me—I know the poet's

general works quite familiarly, I imagine from the style—for the moment my neuralgia is—ah—rather severe—I don't recollect—"

"Give us a rest!—his name!" bawled out the Yankee boy, with the yell of a bursting steam-calliope.

"I don't—ah—wish to appear haughty and reserved. I—er—do this now under protest. Hem! Miss Ella Wheeler Wilcox!"

"You may step down, I believe, Mr. Ambleon, like a witness after baffling cross-examination. I'll be well pleased to hold this court through the rest of the hot weather weeks, as a sort of humorous digestive pill which will help us to take corned beef more profitably, but at present my watch warns me to move an adjournment to accounts. I surmise Shakespeare would come turn about with Poet Squire, and Poet Geoghegan with Poe before the testimony was all in. However," here the learned dyspeptic assumed an authoritative air, "I guess, to prevent forming erroneous opinions which might get in the way later on, and make you feel a sort of bashful, you had best find out right here that it was Swinburne wrote those lines."

"Julius Cæsar! I knew I was a gumphead right when I said Rosetti!" grinned the youngest, who appreciated the last allusion with native mischief and acuteness. "I guess no one wants to feel twice over as a dude does who trips up on his own bamboo. Jiminy! I've liked my lunch!"

Hugo Van Steen did not arrive in the Street until near eleven o'clock. The incident of the woman's death had laid hold of his mind with a profound impression; he saw perpetually between him and the crowds of the streets through which he made his way

with instinctive effort to escape by action the force of memory, her figure stretching out empty arms; her eyes with the great glad welcome in them; her dying, alone and faithful until death. Van Steen's nature, sombre, passionate, demanding, comprehended the long pain of this supreme and pathetic devotion: he thought of his life into which no absorbing passion entered to redeem its feverish emptiness; into which no caressing influence of another infused the warmth of that sympathy with love where loveliness is lost, and a sudden keen regret struck on him. The fidelity of this woman's soul, which had gone beyond the unknown Eternity in its unspeakable aloneness, unmourned, unremembered, without hope, given through the dominant, grand instinct of love, had sought no reward but what a dog asks, the sufferance of his caress. Van Steen, before the image of this abiding and supreme devotion, felt more harshly the solitariness of his own life: the absence in it of emotions tenderer or nearer than the unstable passions, the slight ambitions, the restless dissipations of the society of the city.

A sort of subtle chill hung about him; had he not been on immediate business of his own and Varian's in Wall street, he would have turned back from this unresting sea which had cast up such ghastly jetsam before him. This one amongst the innumerable underlying tragedies of the slums and streets, brought to the surface and sunk again, haunted him with recurrent impressions; he followed its obscure and pathetic final act through the sinister last phases. The Morgue at night, where yellow lights and brooding shadows lie silent on the silent dead; that blank stage on which some actors in the human comedy take their last grim part before a speechless house. She would

be there . . . . A photograph added from the slabs of the dead-house to that number which form the last trace of many lives passed into eternal silence. It would be the impression of her young face whose weariness death had transmuted into rest . . . . A new rough grave filled up in Potters' Field, where no tears fall but the rain-tears of the angels, dropping above the forsaken, the heavy-hearted and the hopeless, whom life had no pity for, and no regret.

Van Steen realized profoundly: a sombre mental atmosphere surrounded him, charged with the influence of the scene he had passed through. He made a strong effort to shake off these impressions; to concentrate his faculties on the business before him; to escape from the pervading memory. He felt a physical inertness—the after-effect of powerful emotion; he entered a bar and called for cognac: the brandy steadied his nerve.

Van Steen entered Archie Ambleon's office and found him opening Greme's despatch. When this business had been gotten through with, the two men commenced their talk.

"Varian calculates on a rise in Excelsior; he is carrying his shares for an advance. I shall take the hint and buy at the present figure—though I don't rely on the mine."

("Something is afoot with Ex.") reflected Ambleon, ("and Greme has got wind of it.")

"I am not sure of Greme in the Otterdorff pool: he will stay by Varian and Otterdorff as long as it serves him to, but I believe him to be in with the Chicago clique. That means he is ready to combine unexpectedly with them, leaving the other two nowhere."

"This is a shrewd fellow," thought Ambleon, inwardly, "Varian may be fooled, but he can't, easily. He don't know all he might about me in connection with Greme, however."

Ambleon found it judicious to remark, while these thoughts ran through his brain telegraphically:

"I believe Mr. Otterdorff knows all there is to know: he is in a position to receive the most reliable inside information. There are always," added Archie, with an open smile, "so many misleading rumors flying round."

Van Steen's glance fell on him full at the instant, and caught a second expression in the smile, a shade of cunning. Ambleon's brown eye shifted under the keen blue flash of the other's: Van Steen felt a moment's uneasy suspicion. He was a man of dominant energy; all his impressions had a certain force.

"That pool on the Grangers is a shaky thing: I repeat it;" said Van Steen. "Mr. Varian watches the market, but he does not watch Greme. If he did it would turn out to his advantage. Otterdorff and Varian are square men: this is one of their drawbacks in dealing with Greme. Both together they are not a match for him."

It was four o'clock; the Wheat Pit, and around it, was a pandemonium of puts and calls; with furious wrangling over eighths and quarters fought for as monkeys fight for medlars. Greme had been attending to his own extensive business in this line, and was in his private office for half an hour before going uptown. His enigmatic visage was alight with the cold fire of his vigilant eyes. When the brokers scrambled out of the Produce Exchange, and rushed for uptown, they heard, on the wing as it were, that the Grangers

had slumped, owing to Chicago manipulation, and that Greme had unaccountably obtained first warning of this, and sold enormously at the price prevailing before the Street in general was aware of the probable decline.

Greme sat upright in his cab as he drove up Broadway ten minutes after. His spare figure, full of nervous vigor, never assumed an attitude of ease; his restless fingers drummed upon his knee with energetic satisfaction. Innumerable ideas passed through his brain, hurrying like electric sparks down the wires, over lines of calculation, conjecture, reminiscence, with prompt combination and response. One thought amongst the rest rose and passed.

"Van Steen may have his suspicions if he will. They don't bring him any nearer to surmising that Varian's broker is privately one of my confidential men. Ha! ha! and Varian is not the sort to find it out single-handed." He gave a dry peculiar chuckle, while his cab threaded deftly along Broadway.

Van Steen joined the rank and file of the men of business pressing uptown. It was half past five o'clock. He had left the L road cars at Fourteenth street, animated by extraordinary nervous energy which found relief in physical exertion, and which was the result of a long mental strain, terminated by the rebound of large success. Van Steen, by a bold and intricate combination had made a *coup* of ten thousand. A year before he had commenced operations on Wall street with uncommon ability, promptness of judgment and energy; he had a considerable fortune and found in the arbitrary and absorbing excitement of the gambler an interest beyond that held by the society which welcomed him, whose artificial pleasures weighted down by ostentatious wealth, resemble the roses of

Midas, which, transmuted to flowers of gold became rigid and scentless. During nine months Van Steen pursued a career of heavy but successful speculation. At the end of this time his luck reversed: he found himself with the wrecks of a fortune. This catastrophe proved his mettle, nerving him to new resolution, and touching to his dominant and vigorous energy the flame-spark of repulse. He doubled his exertions, resolved to coerce Fortune: with insistent pluck and perseverance he fought against his luck. At the end of July, exhausted with perpetual endeavor, incessant calculations, he passed three days at Newport. The morning after the *fête* he returned, his desire for the stress and hazard of the markets renewed and vigorous. Combining his uttermost prudence and audacity, he effected the successful *coup* which seemed to offer him assurance that he had finally reconquered his luck.

As he passed up Broadway he recalled, by an unaccountable impulse, the face of Sydney; its radiant and unshadowed youth, its exquisite suggestion of hope. With a kind of superstition he attributed to her the abrupt reverse of his fortunes: she became his mascotte from that moment: he saw in her the embodiment of hope. The streams of faces passing by him, amongst which there were innumerable women's, accentuated the impression on his mind, by their contrast with the face which he remembered. These, indifferent, tired, haughty, beautiful, unimpressive, or distinct, lacked so completely the unconscious pervading expression of sympathy which was her charm with him, and which had touched him magnetically in the slight contact of the night of the ball.

The dully-gilded hands of the clock before the

Fifth Avenue Hotel told 5:45 on its broad black face. Twilight had fallen, the city was rushing to the finish of its day. Broadway stretched up and down in a track of light beyond the broad open space of Madison Square, and the junction of the thoroughfares; the massive pale *façade* of the Fifth Avenue rose white against the luminous skies, its pedestal of stores brilliantly lit, its eternal loungers still about the portico, and silhouetted in groups against the interior glow of the long wide vestibule. Traffic was hurrying, the pavements were full, high in the twilight air hung electric lamps giving a strange night-effect to the scene. The great bronze Seward, half suggested like a majestic shadow on the skirt of Madison Square, watched the crowds flow and the pale skies deepen. The day had faded, and was past.

"Er—Archie, what a lucky fellow you've always been," said Peter Ambleon, with a helpless sort of look around his brother's rooms where they were smoking. Archie had dined Peter up at Martinelli's, and the two had returned to the Hansen where Archie had a tolerable set of rooms, gotten up after his own heart, and littered with german-favors, souvenirs, notes of invitation and wedding cards, trifles of bric-a-brac bought at a low figure, superficial traces of a shallow life. A pair of moose antlers hung over the door, trophies of a hunt in which Peter had joined in the old Canadian days, but marred by a bullet which he had aimed instead at the animal's heart. This was seventeen years ago, in Peter's salad days, before he dropped into the Empire City Bank and a diet of corned-beef and cabbage. Numberless photographs of dancers and *opera bouffe* stars lay around; mixed up with these there were portraits of different unwary fair Canadians, who imagined these

might serve to keep their flame alight in his shrine of memory. Archie, however, consumed them collectively rather as incense to a complacent vanity, which he shared with Peter his brother, and nursed as he did his neat mustache.

"They are pretty comfortable quarters," rejoined Archie, watching Peter from behind his cigar. "Had neuralgia since you've been up here!"

"Ah—not so much as usual," answered Peter, his bass voice droning the phrase out in a kind of characteristic groan, "but I expect it'll come back again when I get back to my own room in the basement. You know there are two young yahoos next room to mine who have a—er—passion for slugging each other all round their place any time from ten at night till two in the morning. When I have one of my—ah—headaches, these two midnight mules seem to me to be kicking each other through the partition. It's really a—a—disgrace to the Hansen to have such hoodlums stay disturbing hard-worked quiet fellows—"

Archie burst out laughing unfeelingly.

"Peter, old boy, I'd like to put some Yankee humorist on to you and your 'troubles!' Got as many to complain of as Don Quixote, only the difference is that his were other people's that he generously looked after, while yours are your own—and you were never known to be able to look after yourself." Archie smiled, and knocked the ash off his cigar with relish.

"Erg'hem," began Peter, clearing his throat, the sensitive tissues of his vanity pricked sharply. "I don't think it's brotherly in you to speak like that; I—ah—I cannot say I do." Eternally unready, this was at the moment the only retort he could find for the occasion; but having lain *perdu* deliberating, while

Archie pulled an amused whiff or two from his Reina Victoria, he slowly arrived at another which he found more effective, and prepared to speak. However the brisker spirit broke in before he got ready to commence.

"Let's go to the Bijou to-night, old fellow, and forget the sluggers and all that, taking in their brigade of pretty girls. I tell you, Peter (you're keen on good-looking ones) there is a little beauty up there who ought to make your head spin."

Peter perceived that his well prepared retort had missed its opportunity, but he was determined to make amends and detected a second chance.

"Hem, Archie," commenced he, with pleasant blandness. "I think my head is rather stronger than yours in some respects. Don't you remember how—er—you brought five roaring fellows to quarter in my room down stairs for the rest of the night, and—ah—insisted on making up a bed for yourself in my old arm chair?"

"Peter, I'll pitch you out of the window . . . . !" shouted Archie, springing from his lounging-chair. As he glared at the elder Ambleon the latter's aspect of harmless triumph took him so aptly on his mirthful side that he broke into a hearty fit of laughter, and sat down again appeased.

"Some things one shouldn't recollect, you know," said Archie, sucking his cigar. "I wouldn't have that affair about town for a considerable sum in cash. If Mrs. Marston got hold of it she'd make sure of Mrs. Belmore's hearing it, and socially she could knock me over with a feather; might do it too, though I'm a favorite at present. I know one thing to tell you, Peter, though you're never likely to need to remember it, from the present look of your prospects: society

sometimes take the form of a tight rope, where a fellow needs audacity, coolness, and equilibrium to figure. A false step will send you neck and crop into everlasting space, and then there's a roar of triumph from all the rest of them who want your place!"

"Human nature," said Peter, his habitual drone assuming a fine tone of self-complacency. "The philosophy of life. Er—every fellow wants to push his way past other fellows—its always so, I've found. The bank is a fair illustration of the world. I've been there nearly seventeen years, and ah—always seen other fellows promoted over my head."

"Well, never mind, old boy; you'll get up to heaven some day, no doubt. Meanwhile," said Archie, in a business-like tone, and taking out his watch with the impulse of habit, though a clock of the Louis Seize style stood near him on the mantel, "the first act will be through before we can get uptown. I believe we shall have to give up going to see that little charmer to-night. What have you got to say, Peter?"

"I—ah—you know, I've no objection. Young ladies, as a rule, are attractive; and pretty choristers —er—often make themselves more so; but, in fact, I think it would be better fun to go to Schenk's rooms and take a hand at poker. A number of fellows I know will be there. Old Schenk would be delighted to see you again; I don't think we've been there together since two years ago, when you first arrived."

A rapid train of reflection passed through Archie's mind with these words. He remembered spending a good many winter nights in the jolly den on Fourteenth street, which would have seemed dispiriting enough passed in the bare hall-bedroom of his boarding house. There had been a jovial smack of good-

fellowship, hot drinks, and strong-flavored smoke, which seemed at first to combine the finest aroma of welcome to his perceptions, but which became rapidly intolerable on his penetrating to the rarefied atmospheres of recognized society. Peter, his brother, he always regarded as a relic and reminder of this phase of existence which he now found himself in a position to ignore. "Two years ago." The phrase shot through his mind the memory of every gradual step of his ascent. He smiled.

"(No men of importance that I know in town; don't suppose it will matter. Besides, I wouldn't mind showing Schenk and those fellows there that there is a difference between Archie Ambleon, bank clerk, Halifax, and Archibald Ambleon, Esq., member of the Stock Exchange, New York.)"

"Yes, I'll go with you, Peter," said Archie, with a certain condescension. "Have a cigar, here, to carry by you. These are a finer brand than yours."

CHAPTER IV.

THE MASKS OF TRAGEDY AND FARCE.

TEN days had passed since the night of the *fête*. It was a brilliant afternoon at Newport. Bellevue avenue was crowded with turnouts and toilets; the owls of bronze watched from their eminence the tide of Fashion in its flow. Toller was there in a high dog-cart, the habitual Parma violets in his coat-lapel like a badge. Van Blancken was there alone behind his tandem-team, a grey and brown; Jesse B. Hartshorn drove his coach with a load of bright young married women—he had determined these by experience to be more attractive than rose-bud bouquets; the Idol of the Emeralds, Mrs. Belmore, exhibited a superb carriage-dress from her victoria; society was in fact going through the manœuvers of its accustomed dress parade.

Toller passed the carriage of Mrs. Varian, with an elaborate salute; turning abruptly to his companion while his left hand gathered the reins more securely, and with an emphatic controversial gesture:

"Mith Van Kleeck, I 'thure you that's abtholutely the moth' beautiful girl in Newport."

"Is that so? I've heard that of so many girls from you. Are you sure that you're serious this time?"

Toller jerked an ardent glance across his shoulder and glared at his companion.

"By th' Lord Harry, I do thwear I am!"

"My dear Wallace, really—you're becoming something like a self-cocking pistol, or a—a torpedo, you

know. I shall have to make you drive me home if you intend to explode that way over every pretty girl on the Avenue: I expect to find myself blown up!"

"Call me a thtuttering maniac at once—y'know I ca' quarrel with *you*. If you'll lithen, and not go for me when I get lill' exthited, and worked up, y'know—for thwear I ca' help it when I thpeak of *her*—I'll think you're—you're—regular angel."

Toller closed this immoderate speech with an eager stare. His companion smiled.

"How absurd you are," she said good humoredly, "Go on."

"Y'know, Ambleon managed it for me, at the ball; Caprice was flirting dethp'rately, 'nough to distract a f'ler; couldn't get at Van Blancken who was with that kicking mule, Gerard; fact, thought there was nothing for it but to thtare at her hopelethly all evening. Might have got Hartshorn to p'sent me, but he alwayth casts his eye t'wards me as those giant f'lers did at Gulliver, y'know, and it isn't pleasant I thwear—makes a f'ler sort of want to lash out, to show he's there. Well, Archie Ambleon came across me at the buffet, and said he'd thee what he could do 'bout it, and finally—got her mother's consent and brought me forward. He's a c'lossal f'ler." Here he hesitated awhile.

"And now, you thee, Mith Van Kleeck, I'm up a tree. Thath thay ca' get any further."

"Why, what's the matter then?" asked his companion pleasantly: she had an agreeable smiling face, blonde bangs to her eyebrows under a veil of tinted tulle, lively blue eyes, and had a cheerful way about her: she might have been twenty-eight years old. She was Toller's unfailing *confidante*, a lenient mentor of

two years' standing; in fact, she was to him a sort
mariner's compass by which he steered.

"Well—" Toller gave a restive jerk of his head
and paused again impatiently. "Y'thee—" here h
found his tongue with characteristic rush and impetu
"Thend her flowers;—thend her candied things,—
rothe leaves and violets;—thend her i'vitations to driv
with me; fact, I'd thend her m' head if that woul
fetch her;—and ca' get any further t'save m' life
Thend my card, and when she receives me, I thwear
maketh me feel ath if see was her own tomb-thtone
eff'gy. She can't unthtand my tonfounded thtammer
—I can thee she thinks me knocked-down noodle
jutht as Caprice did,—fact, Mith Van Kleeck, thome
times I'd give first f'ler that comes 'long a thousan
cash to shoot me!—Don't laugh—you ca' imagine wha
it feels like to be the motht 'fernal fool in the Unite
States or you'd want to dynamite y'self."

"Nonsense, Wallace! I won't hear you talk s
You have more sense and feeling in a great many way
than half the young fellows one dances with nowa
Any one who understands you as I do knows you'
the best soul in the world; and as for the stamme
that's refreshing after some men's English drawl."

"Yeth, I know, your alwayth kind to me; you'
an angel anyway. But ev'ybody else thinks—"

"Wallace, I can't let you feel like this, it isn't good
for you. You will have seven millions when you
father dies; you are good-looking enough to feel com
fortable any day; you have a handsome allowance
and besides that, a pleasant home in your parents'
house, where your family—"

"O Lord! Don't you thay any more; ca' stand i
Father's a good old sort, so's mother; but I d

thwear Sadie only got herself born to thend me mad. No uthe talking: she'll do it, too, thome day. Says I'm vicious and dithipated; lath thing she did wath to tell pa about a cathe of Pommery I bought of Ambleon on my own 'count and had up in my rooms; she found it out thomehow; and had poor old boy think I that up all night and made an unprincipled decanter of m'self. Those Baptithts uthe tonfounded cold-water cure, ath it were, for their sins, y'know; by th' Lord Harry, I b'lieve it gives them liver chills, for nothing elthe could fetch 'em up to th' reg'lation pitch of intolerance, and crabbedness, and p'vailing dithcomfort. Can't even let a f'ler go to the devil peathefully if he hath a mind to. Thometimes I think it would be a 'fernal good finish-up for me, I thwear!'

"Wallace, you can drive to Mrs. Van Blancken's. It's her day, and perhaps Miss Varian will be there. Anyway, you'll go crazy right here beside me in the cart, if I let you talk like this any longer; so just turn the horse down this street."

Mrs. Van Blancken's reception had been especially well attended. She was entertaining an Englishman, distinguished equally in the eyes of her society by his nationality and title; this gave an added attraction to her house which her set recognized without delay. Toller arrived with Miss Van Kleeck when the crush of the afternoon was over, and Caprice, lounging charmingly in a chair of gilded wicker, was drinking Russian tea with some intimates.

The sun's broad dying beam glowed down the length of the room, and caressed the roses in shallow bowls and the gold-flecked bronze of her hair. A cluster of flushed azaleas filled the hearth between two dogs of gleaming brass; a long glint pathed the polished floor

and focussed in final concentrated brilliancy on the toe of a patent-leather boot. This belonged to the toilet of the Englishman, who, with his back to the mantel, stood in the square-elbowed, firm-planted manner of his kind, his cup of tea paused between the saucer and his lips, glancing around him as he finished his sentence. He was a small, compact, fair man, with straight features, and a face shading to red from the heat and his excitement, over which he occasionally passed a fine cambric handkerchief with his nervous left hand. His dress was perfect in its precision; alert, emphatic, importantly erect, there was something comic in his authoritative attitude. The top of his head, of a warm pink, was softly bald, like that of a young fowl, though he was not yet thirty years old.

"I looked down the bill of fare and ordered my breakfast. My waiter was one of these patent go-ahead fellows you have in America, and was off before I could say Jack Robinson. I thought I was all right, and hadn't long to wait for my eggs, so I looked through the paper he'd brought me. Shortly I saw the same fellow coming along at a preposterous pace, with his hands full of dishes, clean past my table. I called out to him: 'Here, waiter! look out! here's the table!' Fellow turned and stared at me across a dish of shad, you know, and then started off again with 'Right away, sir. Right away!' I shouted 'Where?' but he'd got to cover. I went to my paper again and read the entire account of a club-fracas:—extraordinary affair; fellows got into a promiscuous fight in the card-room, and then offered to knock the Governing Committee out in one round for expelling them. Yankee club-members have native peculiarities one finds rather novel and amusing, by Jove! Well, by the time I had

gone through an account of the combat, three interviews, and the press opinions on the subject, I found my appetite getting pretty keen. I looked about for the waiter fellow. Gone off like a puff of smoke. I opened my watch and waited ten minutes to a second; and then I saw him, his arms full of sliced melons, going like the Flying Dutchman. 'Hi!' I shouted, 'hi, there! where's my breakfast? ordered it half an hour ago!' 'Yessir—yessir—right away!' The fellow had got me so exasperated that I bounced off my chair and sat down again before I knew it. 'Right away, you scoundrel! I won't have my breakfast taken right away! I've told you I'm going to eat it here!' The fellow stood and howled with laughter; by Jove, he fairly shook one of his melons off the dish he carried; and in fact every man in the place was grinning like a separate chimpanzee. I got up, I tell you, fairly in a passion, ordered a hack and paid my bill, put up at the Victoria, and had my breakfast there. If that fellow had shown his impudence in England I should have told the head-waiter to kick him through the window. I assure you I think this sort of thing is a serious drawback in the merits of democracy!"

Caprice threw back her head and laughed, with a brilliant glance into his face.

"It is a good story, very good. But you have one thing to learn, Viscount; in the Empire City society is not the rabble of democracy, but a series of larger and lesser kingdoms, each with its rulers, its courtiers, and its sycophants: in fact society divides itself into distinct circles, like those of the Inferno, which, instead of widening, contract as they ascend."

At the moment Miss Van Kleeck and Toller were announced. Caprice rested her cup of old porcelain on

a Moorish table by her, and welcomed them with her inimitable grace, piquant, caressing, full of individual charm. Her brilliant eyes, continually changing, glanced with roguish raillery into Toller's, as he bowed above her hand; following their direction his own met Gladys'. Toller succumbed to an intoxicated indefinable sensation; the bewitching influence of Caprice had begun to reassert itself with instantaneous effect; in looking from her to Gladys in one moment, the poor fellow's head spun with mingled impulses.

"Good aft'noon, Mith Varian," he said, approaching her, and seating himself with an uneasy jerk. "I wath lucky to happen in late to-day, I thw—thath' say I declare, tho's not t'have missed you, y'know."

He fixed his large blue eyes upon her face, and sitting stiffly, seemed to pause aghast. His inward perturbation and self-distrust, volcanic agents, destroyed his presence of mind. He was on a metaphorical tight rope, and felt as if about to fall.

She spoke to him with a certain effort.

"I am glad you came so that I may thank you myself for the flowers I received to-day."

He started, with a gesture of disappointment.

"But I ordered the f'ler to thend them t'night, in time for Mrs. Belmore's dance! I'm aw'fly sorry, I'thure you I am. They'll wilt, y'know."

"Why did you choose white orchids?"

A peculiar expression was in her eyes, mingled of memory and regret and pain. He observed, without comprehending it, and thought, as he answered the question she had put, "If those marble creatures I thaw in Rome had ever been alive, they'd have had eyes like hers."

"Y'thee, Mith Varian, I thought you were fond of

those sort of things more th'n others. They're the only kind of flowers I've ever theen you wear, y'know; you had them on that time at the ball, and I've had the florist hunting thome up ever thince the night I was p'sented to you. They're rare, one ca' order them by hundreds, like rothes, and he couldn't thecure them at once. I'd hoped ethpecially they'd pleathe you to-night, y'know, and you'd wear them."

His eyes fixed on her with eager enquiry. At their look she turned away her own.

"I will see," she answered him in a low voice. "They may have faded before then."

Wallace Toller felt a chillness of repulse, a vacant impression of collapse.

"Poor thtammering unlucky fool! Better cut m' throat!"

Before he had gathered material for another leading remark, she had risen and was taking her leave.

Gladys Varian had entered her carriage, and was driven to the Cliffs. She was alone, and the rush of a soft wind off the water succeeded the sound of voices soothingly. There were few equipages besides her own: she felt a sense of freedom from the continual observation and comment of society: from its unmeaning fret: from the influences, limited, artificial, same, of an existence which exacts much and returns little. She unconsciously reviewed the day which was ending; its petty ceremonies; its superficial diversions; its phases of useless change. The hours of this existence succeeding each other, resembled vivid colored bubbles, each, being pricked, vanished, leaving no trace of its brilliant tints but a spray of dull water behind it. Gladys felt like one who, with eyes weary to aching, is forced to watch the noisy circle of a gaudy

merry-go-round. For the time she was released; unwatched, she abandoned herself to the inert repose of exhaustion.

The sun had sunk low, tremulous shafts of light lay on the water, a bank of dim cloud to the east flushed mysteriously with sullen inward fire. The wind was soft and fresh with the breath of the sea; the calm of the approaching twilight spread an influence solemn and serene.

She looked towards the waters, where the flame-reflections were giving place to vague mists in the distance. There was a great pain and wistfulness in her eyes: she had paused here with Gerard. She remembered the morning blue of the sea and sky, which had seemed to reflect each other as lovers' eyes reflect each other's light; the words they had spoken; she heard his voice again. For an instant the impression burned on her mind; she trembled under the force of it. Then the whole faded; the flecks of gold on the waters melted into a pallid silver shine; the sun had sunk. She heard the lonely fretting of the sea in its perpetual unrest: the twilight seemed to descend about her, like an impalpable and chilling shroud: "Then I had hope—I thought he loved me . . . . And that has become 'the past'!"

A sense of intolerable loneliness overwhelmed her: memories swept by her with haunting and merciless irony; "the past," which had escaped her as the future had, returned, phantom-like, absorbing her as the torture does one who is bound fast under it.

"It is more pain to be alone," she thought. "Will it be always so? Will it be always so?"

The dull sound of the sea was in her ears. It seemed to her like the voice of her life, which mourned and would

not be still. She looked up from the sea towards the sky. The evening star hung above the mists, immeasurably far and cold. Night was about to fall.

An impulse of horror came upon her. There was no pity in these things. She suffered—and she was alone. All her soul turned with passion to the thought of the man she loved. She craved for his touch, for his presence by her, for an instant's sympathy. The heavy sighing of the sea replied. She was alone.

Shuddering all through her, she called to her servants to return, and drove back swiftly through the twilight.

That night the mirror of Venice reflected Gladys at her toilet. She wore neither jewels nor flowers with the habitual warm white of her dress: behind her appeared the face of her maid slipping into its place a gilded hair-pin. The lines of her brows and the drooped eyelids were very cold in their pale moulding; only the sensitive and saddened mouth suggested a profound regret. She was absorbed in her own thoughts.

Eliza Hickson laid on the dressing-table a bouquet of white orchids. The mirror reflected their gold stamens and the faint flecks of green on their tissues. They were like the orchids of Gerard. Hickson stepped back quietly, and began to speak to her mistress. "If you will please see, ma'am, I think you will find that the flowers are fresh enough to wear. I preserved them carefully."

Gladys' eyes raised swiftly with a strained intensity of look and fastened on the bouquet.

"I do not wear flowers to-night," she said, concealing the effort it cost her to speak. "Remove these."

Hickson's long fingers closed on the bouquet. As

she carried it away, she touched the fragile shapes of the orchids lightly. She smiled.

"She has beauty, and wealth, and youth, everything in the world but—him. My handsome Gloster! And I am pretty and young too. Because I'm poor I have to cringe to her, and watch her go to meet him at fine houses, and even dress her up to look more beautiful—for him to see. Well, that is done with now. She hasn't reached him after all her pains. If I was cheated of him, so was she. She lost him, and I made these remind her of it."

As she returned towards her mistress, the mirror reflected on its silent sheet the malignant smile on her blunt lips changing to one of solicitude.

"Excuse my speaking of it, Miss Gladys, but you don't seem well to-night. Is there anything I might be able to do for you?"

"No, Eliza, I am only tired."

In replying Gladys' eyes met her reflection; its pale lines rose before her like the curves of a faultless marble. The look of the eyes there held hers with a sort of magnetism. "Is it I?" she thought dully. "I saw a different face that night—O heaven, I loved the beauty in me, for I thought it was dear to him! It is ten days past; he has hardly reached his brother yet; but with me how long . . . . Now I know all he is in my life—and I have lost him. He never loved me."

She rose, absently, and turned away.

"Here, ma'am, your fan and gloves."

She received them from the maid without reply. She remembered passing from the room with the orchids at her breast the last night she had seen Gerard. By an irony of memory the atmosphere of that time was reflected again about her: the vibrating forces of

her hope and love: the warmth of deep anticipation. She heard the light tick of a clock upon the mantel and glanced toward it as she went.

"That night the hands marked the same hour: and now—"

She passed swiftly beyond the rose silk hangings of the door.

"Will it be always so? Must it be always so?"

Hickson looked after her craftily as the *portière* fell behind her.

"She's a fool!" she thought complacently. "She loves him as a dog would, and she'll break her heart. If I were to behave like that I'd never give myself a chance to get on in the world."

She gathered up a trail of lace tossed on the ground, and folded it slowly as she stood before the mirror. She felt of its fine fabric enviously, watching its supple flow. "And she thinks no more of that than I would of a yard of tatting. That's always the way. Even outside of her calm, fine-lady beauty that's what makes me hate her hardest. She never takes any notice of all the wealth around her; she seems to feel that she was born to drive through life as she does through the streets, in her carriage . . . . If she had known what it is to go on foot, envying all such as she as they roll on smiling and you toil through the dust behind, she might change; she might value all she's got now—she'd know what it was to be ready to sell your soul for it as I would!"

Hickson twisted the lace between her fingers, and her black eyes flashed upon those of her reflection between the silver framings of the mirror. A sudden impulse held her looking at her face in the Venetian glass. Successive expressions of keen malice, of

poignant desire, of indefinable mingling evil, animated her, vivid reflections from the current of her feelings. A deep flush had richened her sallow cheeks; there was for a moment a coarse and savage beauty in her aspect.

As she stood a new phase of feeling came over her with swiftness. Her hard eyes gleamed, expressing a defiantly complacent vanity.

"I shouldn't look half so bad in her place myself. I'm handsome enough to wear jewels and satin as well as she, and I've heard so often, too. . . ." She smiled, showing between her blunt lips even and large white teeth. "When a girl like me is pretty she ought to be able to get along. And it sha'n't be my fault if I don't. Let's see—I may as well try what I *could* look like if I got the chance."

She threw about her head a rich *fichu* of black lace, whose falling softness concealed the plain black dress, and lent a lacking roundness to her shape. She pulled out one of the shallow sandal-wood drawers of Gladys' open jewel-case, and fastened the dropping folds of lace at the shoulder with the clasp of fire-opals, setting the jewel-eyed butterfly of filagree against her hair.

She glanced at herself with a bold coquetry, and laughed aloud to her reflection.

"She's never worn these since the night he went. Ha! ha! Since he went. I wish he could see me in them now: he's one of the men that likes a handsome face. Ah, Gloster, you've got one of your own, but I'm no such fool as to cry my eyes out for it! . . . ." A slow sullen shade clouded her face in regarding the reflection as she spoke; the triumphant and coarse bravado spent itself in renewed and baffled anger. "What's the

good!" she exclaimed with a furious impulse casting off the fine black fabrics of the glistening lace, "I *do* love him!—I do! I can't lie to my own heart, though I might, I've practised lying long enough—I do, I love him! and one day I will reach him. I can wait . . . . sometime I'll get my chance. My chance! her's is gone!"

The mirror which had reflected the face of Gladys now gave back her face. She stood, the lace crushed in the grip of her hands, fronting there fierce flushed brows and shining eyes.

"And yet. . . . How long will it be before that? 'sometime?' . . . . I'm going crazed! Children and zanies talk of 'sometime,' not a girl like me! One should keep quiet and not boast and rave. Then when the time comes one is ready. I will be ready then!"

A sullen cloud replaced the brilliant fierceness of her eyes. Her habitual expression resumed command upon her features. She turned away.

In five minutes she had arranged the room of her mistress for her reception. The ivory doors, with gold and steel inlaid, of the jewel-case were locked; the confusion of delicate bagatelles on the toilet-table had disappeared; the soft-burning silver lamp hung on light chains, diffusing a sweet peculiar perfume; the place had no occupant, and, very still, seemed to listen to the deep sound of the sea.

The mirror of Venice stood blank, with a cold light falling across its sheet. The moon had risen, and sent a slanting beam through the stained glass of a casement window. The mirror held in its dim stretch forever another scene which had passed before it. In its absorbent depth the moonbeam sought to reach

the secrets, caressing the faint mysterious sheet with a pale and shadowy elusive radiance.

The mirror and the beam had known the beginning. Beyond the eternal stars was held the secret of the end.

A fortnight had passed; the August morning sun caught the gilded face of the Casino clock, indicating with brilliant emphasis the time of day marked there; and brightened the intricately patterned brocade of bedding-plants which raised stiff figures on the turfing of the lawn. The Horseshoe Gallery was filled with fashionable idlers in their coolest morning dress; a certain animation pervaded all the groups; they possessed in common one theme of talk.

"Now, I suppose, he has wasted so much of the time he set aside to spend here that we shall hardly have a chance of seeing him or finding out what his yacht is like. As soon as he's able to, I suppose he'll hurry away to Scotland for the grouse and deer-stalking. What is the use of a Viscount coming over, worth two million sterling, and none of it put into Irish land at that, if he has to catch pneumonia, and stop in bed instead of keeping his engagements to attend all the dinners, *fêtes-champêtres*, and different things that were planned to make his reception flattering, as soon as Newport found he had sailed from England, I should like to know?"

It was a dowager of high degree in the unwritten peerage of the Empire City. She had a strong economical-diplomatic turn of mind, a surviving trait of her early and profitable connection with the hotel business.

"He'll go off to the everlasting drizzle of Scotland,

cursing our climate up and down," said a young man, aside, to Wallace Toller, who had come up from tennis in a suit of faultless flannels.

"Thath' so, and none o' his fault either. F'ler ca' sneeze and thtrangle for a fortnight 'thout wanting to thend thome one to sheol for it. I thwear I know the feeling!" rejoined Toller with force.

"Such a pity," seconded Mrs. Belmore, picking up a trail of ribbon and carefully fraying the rich silk ends. "Poor Mrs. Van Blancken! to have the dear man there in her house, ready to receive the attentions of all Newport, and then for such bad luck to happen! If I were she I should feel just as if I'd chosen a new set of jewels and had them burglarized before I had found a chance to wear them."

"Perhaps he regrets the opportunity of inspecting our stock of American beauties and heiresses," interposed Hartshorn, shedding a debative glance from a height upon the speaker. The latter, never able to estimate Hartshorn's speeches with sure accuracy, turned her head a trifle uncertainly, blushed and picked at her ribbon-end.

"At the Pier we heard he was very nearly dead, about a week ago," remarked Mrs. Marston, who had joined this social constellation with assurance. "We should all have felt like children who find their newest tropic curiosity at the Zoological Gardens dying of home-sickness and east wind."

An unmistakable slight silence fell, broken by Mrs. Belmore with emphasis, aside to the dowager.

"I think it must have been the change we had the day he came. The night of my dance was quite chilly, you know, and baby caught a cold. I made Mr. Belmore put on an extra thick flannel, and it saved

him, I'm certain. If I had been Mrs. Van Blancken, I should not have hesitated, you know, in warning him; of course, being a man, and a stranger to our climate, too, he would never have the sense to think for himself."

"You are very wise, I am sure, Mrs. Belmore," answered the dowager, (Mrs. Loftus Scaler). "Two things young wives should be careful of in their husbands are their clothing and their clubs."

"Sometimes we find them considering rather their own toilettes and flirtations, however," interpolated Hartshorn, with a comprehensive confirmatory glance round the Horseshoe Gallery.

"I've heard he has such a 'cute little bald spot, right on the top of his head!" It was a mischievously pretty *parvenu* in the next group, to a young fellow lounging beside her. "And it does look so cunning, nestling there; I think it's quite a pretty fashion. We often see grey young men in New York, but there ain't so many bald ones. I tell you, Mr. Greme, you'd really better get elegantly bald like him; it would add to your air of being English, so much. You'd find it quite a help, I'm sure!"

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed Toller, while the girl raised her eyes with inimitable *näiveté*. "Caught a crab, Burrall, old f'ler! I thwear you've caught a crab!"

"I believe he's quite witty, though he is a lord, and they are so dreadfully nonsensical, mostly; that is, those that come out here," she continued innocently. "I heard he told a story about throwing a hotel bouncer right through a third-floor window in New York, that made everybody laugh for several days, it was so funny, you know. It's gone all through soci-

ety, and I'm dying to see him; he must be quite a nineteenth century Don Quixote, for these dreadful bouncers are 'most all live wine-bags, from what one hears."

"Little pickle-pot!" thought Burrall Greme, glancing boldly down into her large green eyes. "No wonder old Toller's so shy of letting Wallace loose around here. If he were to quit making a lamblike fool of himself, first over Caprice and then about that beautiful Varian girl Gerard was after, I believe she would manage to gobble him as a meat plant does a fly. These little beggars aren't very choice; his cash, and Fifth avenue social standing would compensate for his bleating noodledom and his stammer."

At this moment there was a pervading stir.

"Why there he is—in the flesh!" exclaimed Mrs. Belmore. "And Mr. and Mrs. Van Blancken! Dear me, I do hope Caprice will have her husband warn him, if she don't like to do it, for flannel is—"

"I am happy to see you out again, Viscount Crooker," remarked Mrs. Loftus Scaler, cordially. She regarded him with opaque prosaic eyes, whose look was fixed by habit unmistakably and steadily on the profit-and-loss-account of this life, between whose lines she was incapable of detecting humor, beauty or romance. "We Newporters must try to amuse you all the more to make up for your sickness, and replace your present impression of our climate's hospitality more pleasantly."

"It's very kind of you," said the Englishman heartily. "It doesn't take much to amuse a man who's spent a whole beastly fortnight solely in lying in bed and blowing his nose."

Mrs. Belmore twitched her ribbon ends and giggled.

"I told you how witty he was; there's a sample," said the girl with green eyes, innocently, turning her glance from that of young Greme, to direct its fullest lustre on the Viscount.

Toller threw the lines to a fine specimen of the imported groom, springing alertly from his dog-cart and up the wide steps of a cottage palace.

"Mith Varian at home?"

He was admitted; a cool dim-shaded atmosphere surrounded him as he passed up the hall flanked by broad twin staircases, and whose shadows were rich with the deep-toned beauty of stained glass. He found himself alone in one of the drawing rooms, and threw himself into a low basket-chair, which disposed his long legs uneasily. He cast his eyes around him, and caught, with unusual perception, the slight pervading suggestions of a woman's recent presence. A cobweb handkerchief of soft old Mechlin lay by the grand piano's desk; a book of Chopin's music was open there; from a vase of Satsuma drifted the perfume of Camoëns roses, subtly richening the air. Toller heaved a misérable sigh.

"Juth' look at this place," he thought, as his glance fixed finally upon the handkerchief. "Nothing thpecially unlike any other house about it really, an' yet one theems to thee her in every corner—ev'ywhere; mutht have been playing thometime this morning; juth' like her to have those rothes clothe to her. Thome of those mythterious melancholy tunes I th'pose; sort' things she can play till I think I've got a thoul and forget I th'tammer. . . . O Lord! Why wathn't I made different thomehow? tho she might care f'me lill' bit—."

"How do you do, Mr. Toller?"

A soft voice hit the thread of his reflections; he started galvanically from his chair.

"How do,—Mrs. Varian?"

Her eyes, under white curved lids, met his; the smile on her lips he saw reflected there.

"Gladys went driving half an hour ago. I am all alone this morning," she said.

"D'you th'pose she might return thoon?" asked Toller, reseating himself beside her, and experiencing a shock in dropping down into his low basket-chair.

"I'm afraid not," said Mrs. Varian kindly. "I am sorry you did not come before. But perhaps it was as well; she had a headache and went to drive on the Cliffs, thinking the air and the sound of the sea might do her good. She was feeling tired, I think, after Mrs. Van Blancken's *fête* in honor of the Viscount."

Mrs. Varian, with infallible fine tact, perceiving Toller's perturbed embarrassment and the anxious question of his eye, spoke softly in her peculiar sweet voice, and gave him time for a decision which she comprehended that he sought to make.

"Perhaps there was some little thing you wished to tell her? She may return by—"

"Yeth, Mrs. Varian, there wath." He interrupted her abruptly. "Y'know—" his large blue eyes stared into hers with an appealing intensity of watchfulness, and he gathered some reassurance from the sympathetic sweetness of her look. "Y'know—y'thee—Mrs. Varian, I love her, and I came to athk her to marry me."

An absolute silence fell.

Mrs. Varian had released her eyes from the desperate scrutiny of his. He remained breathless, with-

out stirring a nerve, watching her white drooped lids.

Ten seconds passed. A little breeze flung by idly, full of the rose's scent.

Mrs. Varian raised her eyes with a certain latent irony towards his face.

"I am in rather a difficult, if not painful position, Mr. Toller. Of course I cannot answer finally on my daughter's part, but—although I do not wish to pain you—I have no reason to suppose it would be likely she should acquiesce."

Toller remained rigid, slightly bending forward, his right hand grasping the arm of his chair. The keen emotional preoccupation kept him physically oblivious. His eyes met hers.

Something which he encountered in that look, some indication of hauteur, of incredulity, of contempt, rather inferred or suggested than revealed, projected on his mind a sharp impression, and snapped the tension abruptly.

"Mrs. Varian," he said, with a certain dignity, "I b'lieve I und'thtand what you're thinking now. You wonder how I've dared to come here to thpeak this way to you."

Her clear eyes wavered for a second from his, and returned to meet his steadfast look with a modified expression. However there remained a remnant of delicately contemptuous derision as she rejoined, deliberately:

"I confess that I am surprised."

Toller's grip fastened closer on the wicker arm of his chair: he recommenced, with manifest effort, obeying the dictates of a firm resolve.

"I' the first place, Mrs. Varian, I want to athk you

to tell me thincerely whether you conthider it pothible f'me to ever gain y' daughter's 'fections. It may thound t' you 'fern—audacious, p'sumptuous, fact quite mad, p'raps—but I athk you to 'member b'fore you anthwer me, that—that—though I 'pear only a thtammering dood to the m'jority of people—I have—thome feelings—an'—a heart."

His customary impetus of speech was gone ; he spoke laboriously, holding his hearer with his supplicating stare, inexpressibly appealing in its unconscious pathos.

A fresh impression had been developing in Mrs. Varian's mind. She returned his look with some moderation of her cool and ironical regard.

"You have shown me that your self-esteem is less than that of most young men. I respect you for it, Mr. Toller. But I can give you no encouragement or hope regarding Gladys."

She ceased, and sought to escape the importunate silent pleading of his eyes. "Really—at first I could hardly take you seriously. . . . It seemed,"—Mrs. Varian paused : she found herself, for the first time in her life, nonplussed.

"Mrs. Varian," said Toller, quietly, "It's always tho with me, I find. The curthe of my whole life hath been that no one will take me theriously. I thtammer—p'raps I'm a little odd-looking—and people think I'm a fool and a buffoon. I didn't mind it tho much till I met her—Mith Varian. I wath able to f'get how foolish I theemed and to take my own part like a man. But now—thince I've known her, thince I've theen her beauty, and und'thood all—all 'bout her, y' thee, I feel what a poor loon of a f'ler I must theem to thuch a creature ath she is, and—I feel—I feel

athamed of mythelf for ever hoping she might 'low me to love her. O Lord! the lath' fortnight I've done nothing but with I had been never born. I love her ath I didn't ever think a f'ler could do a girl, an' ev'ry time I thee her I theem to find out thomething foolisher—more abject, y' thee—about myself. I know she thees me ath all the others do. 'That noodle, Toller.' Mrs. Varian, I dare thay you think of me the same way, but you'd be thorry for me if y' knew.''

The poor fellow looked away from her towards the piano, where the roses stood. A few tears gathered in his eyes.

All the compassionate impulses of her womanly heart thrilled towards him. She laid her light hand softly on his arm.

"I have misjudged you; will you pardon me? Mr. Toller, I am so grieved for you."

There was silence for a time.

"Yeth," he said, dully. "It's sad for a f'ler to love a girl and know that ev'ything about him is wrong from the start. Mrs. Varian, I think I'm one of the loneliest f'lers there is alive."

He looked again towards the piano; a breeze lingered past the roses; one of them shed in a shower the silvery pink of its bright petals to the heart.

He thought to himself, as he watched them fall, over the ivory keys and on the ground, "I never had much hopes, but now they've fallen like that dying rothe."

A profound dejection held him.

"Mr. Toller," said Mrs. Varian, "if I could comfort you in any way—"

She paused: this speech was so completely futile.

"You can't," he said, heavily; "I had better go." He took a couple of steps, then turned again. "Mrs.

Varian, will you athk her for me? I'm 'fraid it ithn't any good. And may I take this lill' han'kerchief? she left it there when she thtopped playing. Her playing is one 'f the only things that maketh me feel ath if I wath like other f'lers, and might be happy."

Mrs. Varian looked into his face, which was indescribably pale and weary.

"Take it," she said. "I cannot say how much I feel for you. . . ."

She turned away. The *portière* fell behind him. She was alone.

Half an hour later a closed carriage moved very slowly along the curving drive leading to the Toller residence, and drew up before the door.

The driver clambered off the box and rang a violent summons on the bell. At the same time, the carriage door was opened from within, and Toller's groom stepped out, remaining by the step and looking anxiously inside the coach. A lackey threw back the hall doors, in hasty response to the prolonged and furious summons.

"Young gent's broke his neck, I calc'late," said the Jehu, briefly, jerking a dirty thumb towards the coach. "Pitched off his dog-cart on his head." Here he turned his back with emphasis.

In two minutes the body of Wallace Toller was laid upon a lounge in the sumptuous reception-rooms; a servant, despatched to fetch the doctor, was joining the laconic Jehu in urging the hack horse to full speed; the groom was standing relating to the terrified mother the circumstances of the case.

"'E come hout o' Mrs. Varian's mansion, an' took the ribbons all of a sudden, marm, afore I fairly 'xpected of 'im. Then 'e drove hoff the grounds at a

hawful rate, with the 'osses a-tearing their shoulders through their collars; an' afore I can wink, 'ad the dog-cart hurled up agin another wehicle, an' 'imself, saving your presence, marm, shot hout like a pea from a sling."

He paused, shifting off one foot to the other.

"I come a 'eader arter 'im, unhexpected-like, an' bust my 'at. Fortnitly, my skull is made has thick has most hanimals 'ave 'em, so—"

"The doctor," announced a lackey, in an awe-struck voice, admitting the physician, who entered noiselessly.

"I believe I must ask the ladies to withdraw. I presume an examination will be necessary," said the doctor, blandly, bowing towards Mrs. Toller and her daughter. "It will be well for the valet, however, to remain. I may chance to need his assistance."

Ten minutes later the physician entered the reception-room where the ladies awaited his verdict, one of life or death.

"I imagine," said he provisionally, and with unaltered blandness, "That you may be prepared to hear the worst at once. The accident has been severe, and though it is possible to anticipate fatal consequences—" Mrs. Toller clasped her hands despairingly upon each other: Sadie raised her eyes towards the ceiling and interjected—"Mercy—miserable sinners!" with audible devoutness. "Consequences," resumed the physician, smiling upon her. "I infer that with care and constant medical supervision, there may be a possibility of recovery. With concussion of the brain we calculate that several days may elapse before any certainty of safety is arrived at. However, the indications," he smiled with reassuring suaveness. "The indications

induce us to hope for the best, until some contrary symptom intervenes. Ladies, I expect I may bid you good-day. I have left explicit directions with the valet, which, I conclude, he will fulfil with care."

The doctor bowed obsequiously, and disappeared.

"Oh, Wallace! My son! my son!" sobbed Mrs. Toller, her tears streaming unobserved to splash in sombre colored spots her roomy bosom of lilac silk. "O my poor boy, what shall I do?"

Her daughter fixed her with an iron glance.

"Do? It is the Lord's just vengeance upon Wallace for his manifold sins and wickedness. He never heeded the warning of Heaven in his stammer, which was bestowed to chasten him, and now—"

Mrs. Toller started from her chair with a desperate gesture and left the room.

"If he dies,—if he dies, and she is left! O merciful God, hear my prayer and save my poor simple-hearted boy!"

CHAPTER V.

THE MAELSTROM.

MR. VARIAN entered his wife's morning-room, and advanced towards her with a step which, extraordinarily brisk and alert, gave one, in conjunction with his general air, an impression of something ungenuine and strained. As he approached, Mrs. Varian laid down the review she was reading, and welcomed his coming with a winning smile.

"Well, Tom, are you going to sit and chat with me a little?" she said. He smiled, also, immediately, but avoided the clear sweet question of her eyes.

"Well, Marie, not exactly perhaps; I should like to do it better than anything else, but I believe I shall have to go to New York on business, and stay till the week's end. In fact I've come to say good-bye, dear." He looked uneasily away, and waited in keen suspense for her reply.

"I'm afraid you are not well, Tom, or worried? Tell me, and I'll not trouble you about it; but I want to know, old fellow."

"God help the man who tries to put on a double face to any woman!" thought Tom Varian, glancing here and there, as he rejoined with cheeriness, "Not at all, dear."

Here, however, he came to a stand, being a poor hand at dissembling. Her fine intuition warned her distinctly; she rose and touched the lapel of his coat with a familiar gesture very caressing, while she compelled his eyes to hers.

"Dear old fellow," she said, very softly, "Is there anything that troubles you? You wouldn't blind me if there was?"

"No, there's not," he answered, "except that I'm leaving you awhile." Taking her face within his hands, he kissed her between her arching brows. Their eyes met for a moment. "Good-bye. God bless you, Marie, little woman."

She watched his figure disappear with an expression of mingling anxiety and tenderness. Certain faint lines of care became subtly deepened near her mouth: she resumed the review where she had broken off, but failed to comprehend the sentences and paragraphs she read. In her ears jarred the swift recurrent rap and clicking of the wires, as she had heard them with a message coming in; before her eyes kept shifting the sight of her husband watching the ticker from New York.

Tom Varian was on his journey; the Fall River boat cut the water, flinging it past her bows in undulating foam-lines. Newport seemed to be drifting behind into twilight unknown seas.

Varian pulled a despatch from his pocket and read it through with a haggard and eager look—the significant and tragic expression of a man who searches for a hope he knows is absent.

"Come to New York at once. Danger more imminent and grave than threatened. H. VAN S."

"If I can weather it out this time, I will give up. Great God, why have I disregarded her advice till now? It may be too late for even that!"

The sunset's gold spreading wide across the sea; the

sweeping flash of the silver gulls in their flight; the propeller's unceasing throb; the force of his own irresolute regrets, combined an unendurable atmosphere about him from which he could not escape.

Varian paced the deck continually, looking forward where the night was falling, always towards New York. In the boat's interior, passengers were moving or lounging under the brilliant lights; preparations were being rushed through in the saloon for supper, and the engine's regular working vibrated like a giant heart-beat through the ship.

Tom Varian walked till the night fell and the stars came out; they looked down twinkling and glittering and brought to his mind an unusual simile; that of the eyes of his world, cold, vigilant and unsparing, watching his fall.

"If it comes to that . . . ." Varian shuddered through his robust frame like a woman or a child. "How will they bear it?"

His thought arrested itself there as one might who finds his foot on the edge of a cliff and sees the heights stretch down. The water sucked past the boat's side with a hungry sound in the darkness. He stopped by the guard-rail and looked over: the noise of the sea was rushing in his ears.

"I have brought them to it," he thought. "I have done it all. I should be better off below there than when I shall have to meet her eyes."

He stood where he had paused, looking down to the black water, a dull noise sounding in his brain. He was alone on the deserted deck; and the night was dim under a moonless sky. Abruptly he saw the high-hung lights of a ship gliding through the dark towards him. No bulk or masts were visible; only the

raised lights pathing the air. He gazed upwards, fascinated; his chilled blood seemed to cease flowing about his heart; he comprehended. This might be death.

Varian's hand gripped the guard-rail; he was paralyzed fronting the approaching lights. They were sweeping forward silently against the night, and the years of his life rushed past him as he watched them come. He felt a desperate reluctant anxiousness to hear the crash; to lose the torturing consciousness of hope and fear: to surrender finally and meet the end. Ten seconds had passed.

Simultaneously, with an appalling sound, the whistles of the two boats shouted hoarsely like giant voices on the night. The lights quivered in midair where they hung, and ceased for a second to advance. Then Varian, holding by the guard-rail like a drunken man, heard a great din of voices, mixing with a churning and anger of the waters, and with the noise in his own reeling brain, and the lights above him slowly backed away, sullenly receding through the night.

Tom Varian staggered to his cabin and swallowed some brandy from his flask. He felt a sort of collapse; his strung nerve-tension relaxed abruptly; a heavy dullness settled on his brain. A persistent idea possessed him.

"I must go through with it; there's no escape."

Van Steen met Varian next morning at Archie Ambleon's office. A consultation occurred absorbing two hours. It was past midday. "The stock has risen since the calling of the Regular List this morning," said Ambleon." In fact—er—the value of shares may be said to be appreciating hourly. At eleven o'clock, just be-

fore you came in, Chicago and Great Western stood at 72½; at present"—he ran his eye down the ribbon of the ticker which rolled its hieroglyphic length into a basket on the floor: "Bid 73¾, asked 74⅛."

Varian stared straight before him. "Then that is the end," he said. Van Steen's eyes flashed upon him keenly. "Do not give over!" he remonstrated with energy. "Have you no shares on which you can realize the sum demanded; no bonds, securities?"

Ambleon interrupted him blandly.

"Even if the present shortage were covered, and it would be a settlement at ruinous figures, as you observe, considering the advance, there are other disastrous speculations to note down. After its phenomenal boom three weeks ago, the Excelsior Mine's lode of silver ore gave out suddenly: the stock immediately sank out of sight. Mr. Varian had made a profit by selling half his load of stock at the figure reached; but he carried the rest, and when the break came had it on his hands at a dead loss. Besides, there are minor difficulties and entanglements connected with the consolidation of the Ottawa Central with Halifax and North Eastern. A difference has sprung up between Otterdorff and Hartmann, which includes the interests of the pool projected by them, in which Mr. Varian is—"

Van Steen interrupted curtly:

"I have heard all this: we will admit that the situation is alarming. Who are the brokers to whom the principal amount of Chicago and Great Western is due?"

"Freedman & Co., Russell Morse & Co., Brown & Bell, Nichols Brothers," responded Ambleon, passing the ticker's gold record through his fingers lightly, and with an open smile. "The shares were sold three

weeks ago at 46; Buyer 30: yesterday Brown & Bell sent in a demand for the shares bought by them, which renders it absolutely necessary to secure them before 2.15 P.M. to-day, when delivery is due. I have just had a message from Freedman & Co., requiring the amount of stock sold them to be made over, and expect to hear from Morse and Nichols at any time. The wonder is they have delayed so long. Mr. Varian is caught short: under the circumstances a man must expect to suffer." Ambleon raised his eyebrows with deprecation and lifted a hand to his mustache.

"This enormous rise in Chicago and Great Western is a clique affair and boldly engineered. Brown & Bell bought largely some time ago, I believe on the account of Greme. If Greme is the leader of the corner, the short interest will be twisted without mercy. In any case the stock must be delivered to-day. . . . I can see no escape."

"A hundred and fifty thousand swept away," said Varian slowly, looking at Van Steen. "If I could save that I might start anew. There would be hope still. . . ." His eyes fixed with a desperate repressed eagerness on the ticker's ribbon; he lingered on the last words hungrily. "We could live."

"Chicago and Great Western, 75:" murmured Ambleon, who had watched his glance.

"I have bonds of that road's; I might sell—"

"Bonds!" exclaimed Van Steen. "Are they convertible? Let us examine them." He spoke rapidly, not concealing his anxiety. "Are they in this office at present?"

"I imagine," said Ambleon, without stirring, "that such bonds, though possibly of use in a less complicated disaster—."

"If it is convenient, Mr. Ambleon," said Van Steen coolly, with a keen glance at the broker, "I intend to examine the bonds at once."

Ambleon's eyebrow lifted slightly with a peculiar nerve-twitch common to himself and his brother Peter, an indication of suppressed uneasiness. He summoned a clerk, gave the necessary directions blandly, and lounged in his office chair awaiting the result.

Varian's look fixed on Van Steen's face with an expression haggard and awful in its question. Van Steen's eyes watched for the door's reopening. Ambleon regarded the two men stealthily under his eyelids as he lounged.

The click of the turning handle jarred on the concentrated silence of the room. The clerk laid a packet on the table by Ambleon's elbow and withdrew.

Van Steen reached it towards him and commenced examining the bonds.

There was dense silence. Varian's eyes had shifted off his face to the packet on the table. Ambleon remained quiet, still watching the two men before him.

"Mr. Varian, we will leave this office for that of the Chicago and Great Western instantly. There you will present this block of convertible bonds, demanding immediate surrender of equivalent shares. This will save you."

As Van Steen spoke, he rose, extending his right hand to Varian.

"Thank God, and let us shake hands. There is no time to be lost."

Tom Varian's grasp met his in silence. The air seemed to vibrate about them heavy-charged with profound emotions.

Varian took Van Steen's arm, and passed out of the office beside him.

"Van Steen, in the name of the little woman at home, and Gladys—God bless you."

His voice broke. Tears rushed to his eyes. The two men walked on with bent heads.

Greme had outlined a big campaign in Chicago and Great Western. Having ascertained the total capital stock of the road he set a score of secret agents to work, and secured, by quiet time-purchases, control of shares amounting to three times that quantity. The stock began to fall by eighths and quarters. The short interest was skilfully encouraged, and increased enormously. Within twenty days the stock, perfectly manipulated, had risen to 75. The corner was maturing.

"I shall have taken seven thousand by the time we've got through with it." The little Winskouper leaned an elbow on her office-table, biting a thumb nail at ease, complacently, *vis-à-vis* with Greme.

"I directed Brown & Bell to call on Varian for his shares yesterday. I have calculated that by this affair, with the rest of his entanglements, I shall finally succeed in wiping him out:—revenge is a thing it is my habit to bid high for."

The operator's pale lips compressed to a thin line; his eyes glittered with a near approach to passion which gave his masked physiognomy a new and singular expression.

"I must say (when I'm long of a stock) I like to hear the bears talk while their toes are under the screws. It makes me think of a yard-full of lively pigs being killed right at one time. Say, Mr. Greme, how high shall you run up the price before you get through, sir?"

"Maybe 100. It depends on how much they can stand. Better to let a man compromise at 150 than compel him to settle at 200, thereby breaking him and receiving only fifty cents on the dollar."

The little Winskouper grinned widely, with fine financial appreciation, and they proceeded to the confidential transaction they had met to elaborate.

The hour-chimes of Trinity had mixed three times with the roar of the money quarter and the hum and fume of tumultuous life below. There was a sullen but feverish atmosphere of depression, like the dull calm which harbingers a storm. Greme's combination was working; the slow coils were contracting; the scheme was arriving at maturity. Many men, who had sold like Varian on buyer's option at thirty days, were desperately seeking a means of eluding the iron gin closing down on them. Brokers, whose clients, having extended their margins to the uttermost limit, at last confessed their resources exhausted, sold inexorably and instantly. The great firm of Belmore & Co. was reported heavily short; Otterdorff had covered at a loss of $70,000; and several large houses on the street were alarmed to the verge of panic. Consternation prevailed. In an hour the stock of Chicago and Great Western had made a menacing stride, and stood secure at 90.

"Say, Golden, I'm in for it over ten thousand on C. & G. W. at this moment, and I will swear the infernal corner mounts it above 100 before the day's past. I went in on my own account for the first time; have done a purely commission business till now, and God knows if the end of this won't find me broke."

"Curse Greme!" muttered Golden, in his deep throat, "he has broke more men on the Street in his

time than the devil holds in Tophet. He has out calls at thirty days, made when the stock was weak at 44. Men who had their shares ready, sold for a profit at 50, thinking the top of the boom was reached, and intending to buy in lower than they sold; others who sold without having previously secured wherewith to meet their obligations, waited from day to day on the rack, hoping the tide would turn and give them the chance to buy lower and so less ruinously. The uninstructed Public—that vast dolt which collectively flounders through the Street like an elephant in a heavy sea, and separately, through its unguarded entities, plays blind-man's buff amongst the schemes of men like Greme—finds itself sold again, and wanders by the wrecks of its speculative air-castles in legions of rash clerks, old women, and mixed elements who hunt for gold and find new wisdom. The world goes well with men like Greme!"

"I shall suffer with the rest if I can't see some way out of the trap before my contracts come due. My wife and child—why in the name of God didn't I stay my hand while there was time? Golden, you know how a fellow feels who's poor as yet, and sees his brave little girl beside him without all the comforts she's been accustomed to; holding out, bright and cheery and loving, but—but—I thought if it turned out as the opening promised; I could give her more; some of those little pretty fooleries women like, in token of my first success. . . . And now, if the shares reach 100, I shall go home to her—a broken bankrupt."

"Poor old chap!" said Golden, with a deeper tone in his big voice. "I'm nearly busted myself or I would find a way to help you out of this. You're not the only

fellow with a broken heart and purse to-day. Greme is a hell-fired Juggernaut. I wish, if there's such a day to be hoped for as a day of judgment, Stone, that I'll see his gold bags used as weights to drag his seared old soul to sheol!"

Golden waxed warm with honest fervor, and gesticulated with his hairy hand and fingers as if indicating simultaneously a complication of bids in the tumult of the Long Room.

"Listen here, Stone; I can tell you a story of Greme that will make you forget your own troubles for awhile in hearing another poor devil's. It's always better for a man I find.—Two years ago Greme was in control of a majority of the shares of Albany Central: the directors stood one in his favor, and it was with this one I have to do. He was a square dealer, and a big-souled fellow; looked like a true man, and lived up to his looks every hour. He and Greme were friendly then; he made one at those choice dinners at Newport that many a man has enjoyed with Greme, who will live to remember them long after he's forgotten his first wife and his last fancy. Well, the annual meeting of the Board to decide on a dividend was at hand, and Greme had laid his plans, believing himself secure of the majority's support. The day before the directors met, a young man entered the office of Blank and said to him:

"'Mr. Blank, I am an honest man and have just become a poor one. I put all my earnings in the custody of the Inviolate Trust Co. This has suspended, and the entire assets are in the hands of a receiver. The earnings of thousands of others like me are absorbed beyond recall, I hear. I have now only my pay as a clerk to depend upon. I must begin

ew. Two days ago I looked forward to marrying a ung girl I've waited for some years, on the little vings I had put by, and my employer's promise to crease my salary. All that is over now. I come to k you, sir—'

"'Stop a moment,' said Blank. 'I must think.'

"There was silence for five minutes, and the young an sat quiet and watched the other's face. Blank, dur- g that time, came to a big conclusion, and turning, id to him: 'See here, young man, I am right sorry for u. The Inviolate Trust Co. is a speculative swindle; ceiving the earnings of lads like you till the total as large enough, then gobbling it. I will do this for u. I will buy shares in a stock I know of that is und for a quick rise. These shares will bring in a uple of thousand dollars' profit and it shall come to u. Don't talk of gratitude. I was once a young an in this great city myself, and poor. Come to my fice here next week. Good day.'

"Before that night Blank was in possession of all e facts about the Inviolate Trust Company that have er come to light. When the directors of Albany entral convened next day, Greme found a combina- on had taken place between Blank and others on the oard which placed his support there in the minority. e had lost his point. His schemes were frustrated. heir policy was the opposite of that which he had out- ed and nearly proved his final wreck. He and ank met shortly after and the latter gave him some that plain talk that marks an honest man, for gues are equally afraid to use or face it. The Knave Inviolate Trust now understood his quondam friend: d he swore vengeance on him with one of those iet-spoken, ungodly oaths that he was never known break.

"Since then every combination of Blank's has bee unlucky. A sinister and hidden power thwarts him a every turn. Greme might have the Devil to back hi if he is not Shitàn in person; for he fathoms Blank schemes before they're made. He is the very Nemes of Blank. The poor fellow has been struggling like hare in a gin; constantly planning combinations tha grow more far-fetched, improbable, even flighty: b coming careworn and harassed, and looking like haunted man. He kept on doggedly in spite of all, an three weeks ago, when C. & G. W. weakened and th prices sagged away, he sold a big amount for futu delivery. The stock flew up to 90 from 46 in twent days, and this day that man must meet his obligation Two years ago he was worth three millions, with a g gantic horizon opening before him: to-morrow, mar my words, the street will hear of the breaking Varian & Co."

The two brokers had walked along Wall stree and stood under the big clock by the Stock Ex change. "Five minutes past three," said Golde looking up. "Let's go in and hear what the boy are saying. They are safe to have the last news Varian in there."

The two men entered the chaos of the Long Room Golden forcefully making his way, while Stone followe like a painter in a ship's wake.

"What's bid for Chicago and Great Western? bawled Golden, across the fierce din of contendin shouts and bids. "95—5½!" shrieks a broker in h ear.

Across the response, like bullets and fragments burst shells, shot frantic flying shreds of speec "Five thousand Reading at 6⅛!" "Take 'em!

"I'll sell 400 Lake Shore at 90!" "I'll take any part of 500, regular way." "How many?" "*About* three," and three active upheld fingers indicate the number purchased across the tumult. "Sell two hundred Chicago and Great Western at 6¼—6¼!" "Take 'em!" "Take 'em!" "Take 'em!" "Done!"

Golden turned away and made toward the open space. Stone's face was drawn and ashy-colored as he followed.

"Chicago and Great Western still rising?" asked Golden of a broker near him on the floor. "How's the corner going?"

"Up to a hundred before we leave the Long Room. Varian's got out of it by a big manœuvre," responded the other. "Saved him a hundred thousand clear. Went up to his office before two o'clock, presented a block of convertible bonds, and compelled 'em to make over equivalent shares. Reminds me of Jacob Little and old Drew!"

Golden caught a long breath.

"Handsome Tom must have gotten him a lucky piece to carry since last heard of," he said. "Cheated the devil for once, thank God!" he added, with characteristic force.

The great bronze Seward had watched the sun go down upon another day; had numbered on his tablets the thousands ebbing and flowing past in the crowds beneath him; and sat, in his immovable bronze robes, the dim, slow light of the stars blending upon him with the piercing rays of high-hung electric jets. The city had rushed through the business of its day, and its freed tides flowed to pleasure or repose.

Tom Varian sat at a table littered with papers, and lighted by a student lamp. His head was bent upon

his hand, and his fingers twisted amongst the thick hair at his temple with an habitual, uneasy movement. A great mirror gleamed dimly behind him through a veil of net; the room's furniture and hangings were draped in dull holland; the unwound clock which stood on the mantel watched him silently.

He lifted his eyes unconsciously in pursuing a mental calculation which engaged him, and they rested on the Steinway grand piano stretching against the wall; its carved case was enveloped in covers; its strings, dumb, like the unwound clock. These things struck upon him with a blank, forsaken impression of appeal; his mind was impelled by them away from the ruinous showings of the papers laid before him. The lamp shed a full light on the table, leaving the large apartment gloomy where the dim walls stretched up, showing his giant shadow as it fell, and the high cornice gathered darkness.

"Poor little Gladys, the instrument seemed alive when she used to touch it. How can I live to tell her that our old home must go to strangers, and through me?"

Night quiet had fallen on Madison avenue: there was not the sound of foot or wheel. Varian dropped his head down on his arms. The silence seemed to close around as he sat alone with his thoughts.

A rapid firm step mounted the stoop, and the hall bell gave a summons which startled eerie echoes through the silence of the house. Varian started from his seat with that tense expression of lip and brow which indicates nervous forces strained beyond control. Not waiting for the answer of a servant to this call, he admitted the man without. It was Van Steen.

Closing the heavy door, whose stained glass panels clashed to with a shivering sound, Varian looked with haggard scrutiny into the face of Van Steen. The two men stood under the single lamp suspended there, and the light cast down harsh shadows on their faces, in sinister effects.

Varian forced himself to speak.

"What news, Van Steen?"

"Bad," replied the other with a tightening lip. The man before him trembled slightly from head to foot as he heard.

"Come in here," he said, very low; "I have been trying to find out how I stand from these." He closed the tall carved door of the room behind them, and they seated themselves at the table, within the radius of light. "Now—what is the last?"

"Hartmann and Otterdorff's disagreement has terminated in a rupture of their relations regarding the consolidation of Ottawa Central with Halifax and North Eastern. The thing has fallen through, and promises to remain at a standstill unless a new combination is formed to push it on with vigor. Meanwhile, your interest there is not sufficiently powerful to effect any signal improvement in affairs at present, though a certain amount of valuable capital is entangled which is bringing in no returns. Earnings are poor, and the stock is in no demand, therefore it would be sheer loss to sell out of it at present. Five days ago, when the stock of Central touched 60 on the prospective consolidation, you might have sold at something like a profit; but since the rumors of the coming break between Otterdorff and Hartmann the shares have gone down with a rush, and the stock is dull at 55."

"Dear God, Van Steen, in everything about my life I am too late!"—Varian burst out in strong emotion, gazing haggardly at his friend's face.

Van Steen stretched a slender and vigorous hand toward him and laid it earnestly on his.

"Varian—you forget. You might be a bankrupt to night."

The brief pregnant words, and his peculiar magnetic hold asserted their influence on the unfortunate man and checked his impetuous despair. A great wistfulness took its place: his eyes met Van Steen's with pathetic dependence and appeal; their expression touched the young man powerfully.

"Hugo," said Varian, in a lower voice, "all that's left in my life I owe to you. Had the name of my house been disgraced by bankruptcy, had I found myself unable to meet my contracts, I would have been a dead man to-night. As Ambleon read the gradual rise of Great Western off the ticker's ribbon, I felt like a man who bleeds to death and knows the end is closer on him with every drop that flows . . . ." His voice shook, the racking emotions renewed themselves, bringing a damp dew to his temples where white hair flecked the thick growth of the brown. "I did not know there was such mortal agony this side of hell. Sooner than have been compelled to see the rest, I had resolved to take my life." He ceased, overcome by fearful memories of the time. Van Steen spoke to him.

"Varian."

He turned his sunk eyes on him scaredly, with a latent wildness in the look: they had strayed to the voiceless clock and fixed there vacantly as he ceased.

"Varian," said Van Steen, "do not think of what has passed to-day. Men who brood over hours like

those go mad. Think of the future where you may retrieve your past. Think of your wife. Think of—Gladys. . . . ." With her familiar name the father's tenderest feelings stirred: a tide of mingled memories touched him like the touch of her caressing hands. With a single look about the place that once had known her voice and music, Varian covered his aching eyes and the balm of tears came to them.

CHAPTER VI.

MIDNIGHT.

NEXT morning Mrs. Varian received a brief dispatch from her husband:

"Shall be with you to-night.—T. V."

She passed the day in undefined mental agitation, awaiting his return. The demands of society occupied her incessantly: she found its caresses importunate and its diversions stale. Gladys was beside her mother in the succession of ceremonies and *divertissements*. Newport, unable to approach her with its accustomed polo and yachting talk spiced attractively with aristocratic allusions, had lately fallen back, to a man, on a policy of hard gazing and disconcerted silence. To this rule there was one marked exception. Burrall Greme had commenced a course of assured and conspicuous attentions, undiscomfited by the haughty repulse with which she met his bold advances. "Now that fool Toller is out of the way and likely to stop there, I can pitch in without running the risk of being said to condescend to rival him. She's a beauty; I must say he showed more taste than such a preposterous noodle ought to be allowed to own!" Burrall smiled to himself at his point, ironically and with some malice; showing in his young and smooth face sinister lines suggestive of his father's visage. The girl with green eyes, in such public places as admitted of her watching the queens of fashion into whose "set" her wealth was yet too

newly acquired to carry her, perceived the strenuous efforts of young Greme and satirized to a new and less desirable adorer, the one who had eluded her.

Finally, the day had fretted itself out, and followed the eternity of other days, which the women of the great world fling towards the past as they fling soiled *gants-de-suède* and trifles to their maids.

Gladys lay back wearily beside her mother against the cushions of the carriage. They were returning home. Twilight had fallen.

"You have been feverish and restless to-day," said Gladys to her, "dear little lady." In speaking this familiar name of caress, the girl slipped her hand into her mother's, quietly, without moving otherwise. A warm touch and response met her, and her hand rested where it lay. The two women felt a soothing and intuitive consciousness of mutual sympathy, though Mrs. Varian had not replied. They passed under the four bronze owls, whose lantern eyes poured shafts of yellow light across their faces through the dusk.

"He will be home to night?" said Gladys presently.

"Yes, dear . . . . I am afraid—" she ceased; there passed an equipage with clashing harness about it, and large lamps that glared like angry yellow eyes. "Mrs. Belmore: her husband is with her. That woman, without an idea beyond her nursery and her emeralds, is happy. I often think that a woman's content is in inverse ratio to her sensibility."

"It is true," Gladys sighed wistfully. "Very true. What was it you said when the carriage passed? You seemed distressed." Her hand pressed those that held it, softly. She turned her face a little.

"Dearest, I have no right to burden you with griefs of mine. There is nothing more than usual. I am nervous, depressed, dispirited; that's all. I have been ever since he went. The impression of trouble on his face, and fear that I should reach the cause, has never left me since."

"If there was anything, he must have tided it over, dear little lady, or he would have sent some message to us. Do not be troubled."

There was something inexpressibly tender in their voices and speech towards each other. Gladys had never approached to her mother the unceasing pain of her deep love for Gerard, but the other woman, with unerring instinct, comprehended it with compassion. In the heart of each was a perception of the other's unspoken sorrow. Towards each other they felt and showed an intimate sympathy and love.

"Ah, Louise, it is so kind of you—and dear Sydney; how sweet you look to-night! I think she will be ready very soon; when I left her she only had finishing-touches to put, and Hickson is always very quick."

"Well, Marie," said Mrs. Oriarte, chuckling pleasantly, and throwing open her indispensable fan. "Most women in Newport would be proud to have your Gladys under their *chaperonage*."

"I knew you would take her for me; you see I expect my husband back to-night, and I did not wish to deprive Gladys of the ball because I want to welcome him."

"While we're waiting we can chat, that's one thing," said Mrs. Oriarte, flicking her fan, and with a sociable intonation. "That poor soul, Wallace Toller, is pretty well at the point of death. I saw his mother

—she's almost cried her cheeks away, Marie: I hope neither you nor I will ever have such trials to endure. The worst of it is, his poor mind, such as is left of it, is terribly disturbed. He lies and raves, stammering so that no one can make out *what* there is the matter; and she, who knows every turn of his voice, can only distinguish one word out of all the unceasing gibberish he talks. You won't—now, Marie, you know we are old friends, and she knows it, and she and I were schoolmates too, so—promise me you won't be proud—or mad—or—or anything; now will you, dear?"

"No, Louise; old friends should never differ."

Mrs. Oriarte looked about her hastily and drew some short uneasy breaths.

"Well, dear—Marie—you see—he keeps on saying Gladys' name. Did you ever hear of such a thing?"

Mrs. Varian's brows assumed a look of pain.

"Poor fellow!" she murmured, involuntarily, glancing towards the piano where fresh roses had replaced the dropping Camoëns. "Dear Louise, I am so pained; I know the reason of this; he loves her. I feel that what I say you will keep secret. It was after leaving this house—he had proposed for her to me, poor lad, with manlier words than one will often hear—he met the accident. Naturally, I refused him; though before the interview was through I felt—. You say he is dying now?"

"No, I didn't quite. But he may be; they can't tell yet. Delia is almost crazed; I spared half an hour to sit with her yesterday, between Mrs. Belmore's tea and Caprice's reception. She was nearly worn out, poor dear, sitting up every night by his bedside and hearing him calling *her* name—you know—and listen

awhile, and rave and call again—oh dear! dear! dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Oriarte, with puckering lips and an hysterical tilting of the fan. "Marie, I can't bear to think of it!"

"I feel as if it was my fault in some way." Mrs. Varian's eyes were very troubled,

"Of course," her friend began again, with mournful vivacity, smoothing the fine lace of her open fan, and taking up her point like a dropped stitch in knitting. "Of course, I couldn't do very much, but I tried to cheer her up a little. I told her how my poor Eliot died, ten years ago; though of course his was—what do they call it?—cerebral meningitis, and not concussion like poor Wallace's. Besides, Beekman Gerard, over in Paris, I hear he's nearly well again from a very dangerous attack—I told her that. I really think she felt a little better when I went away—Why, Gladys! how do you do, my dear!—how beautiful the child is, Marie!"

They all rose, Mrs. Oriarte passing to her carriage with amiable fluttering of her broad black fan, and cheerful chatter by the way. The two girls entered after her, and the door shut to with a brisk slam.

Mrs. Varian slowly passed upstairs, her supple black velvets trailing behind her over the shallow polished steps. She looked back into the broad hall as she went: the double doors below were open, and showed the terraces beyond where flickering leaf-shadows touched the moonlit floors.

She entered her morning-room, where a lamp burned softly under a colored shade. She passed the apartment's length towards three casement windows, looking around her wistfully as she went, and flung them open, letting in the moonlight untinged by the dimly-

coloring stained glass. Beyond, meeting the deep sky on the horizon's rounding stretch

> "——The sea, moving, saw before it move
> One moon-flower, making all the foam-flowers fair."

A sense of the profound and tranquil harmony of the night came to her as she looked towards the sea. Lying in exquisite physical rest in a deep chair by the casement, the distant idle sounding of the waters sung her to sleep. Time passed; a little chiming clock thrilled out the quarters, making fugitive light echoes; a fire-fly drifted idly through the casements and glowed on the warm dusk beyond. The night wind, narcotized with blending flower odors, went by with dreamy wings.

It was an hour before midnight.

Tom Varian entered softly and made his way towards his sleeping wife. The moonlight, which rested calm upon her eyelids and her peaceful brows, searched his worn face and found deep lines on it. He waited by her for a time, watching the soft breaths drift between her lips; hearing the slow sound of the sea. His attitude showed the dread of wakening her; his irresolute hand touched her fine hair, lingering there as if he longed that she should rouse without his actually calling her to consciousness. There was a haggard trouble in his look; he leaned his hand upon her chair.

The calm about her was gone; she moved unresting in her sleep. The clock's chiming nerved him to final purpose; he bent and kissed her pale curved lids.

"Marie!"

"Tom!—you are home with me at last!" She was beside him, with her two hands on his arm, before his

pale lips ceased their trembling. "Dear, you are safe?—there is no trouble?—ah, if you knew how anxious I have been!" Her smile, full of welcome and reassurance, shone in the moonlight. He turned away his face. His arm shook under her hand's touch.

"Marie—wife—." He stopped. "God help me to tell you—yes, there has been trouble."

"Then I was right—! Tom—old fellow—is it much? Be brave—look! I am calm. Tell me the worst at once."

"I am—O, God! turn away your eyes!" He looked in agony towards the calm of the sea and the night-sky. "There will be something left after I have paid them all—something for you and her. . . . I am all but ruined, but I will start again. I'll get new wealth. I will make up to you for this. . . . ."

His strength gave out; he staggered heavily against the chair she had left.

"Tom—my husband, lean on me. Dearest—"

"No—no—! Do not be kind; I cannot bear it from you now. I have no right to your tenderness—I have brought down this upon you—I—." His face was livid in the moonlight, his hand reached to his throat as if he stifled.

His wife laid her light hand firmly on his breast, with the familiar gesture of caress. Standing before him she held his wavering eyes with the earnest shining of her own. "Husband," she said, a rare smile touching her lips as she spoke to him, "is it I, your Marie, your wife of twenty years, whom you should put away from you when trouble comes?" Her left hand glided up and touched his throat, and drew down his head towards her bosom. The infinite caressing of her voice and eyes unmanned him; his pride gave way

like deep ice breaking up; he abandoned himself to the warmth of her clinging arms, and bowed his head upon her breast.

"Beloved, beloved," she whispered, holding him there; "how could you doubt my love? A true woman's heart is more faithful to her husband in trouble than in joy."

Varian felt a profound pervading sense of peace, of rest after conflict, of deep and soothing calm. A measureless gratitude to her was in him; the dreaming moonlight seemed to hold them still, where they stood, in its still repose.

The clock chimed another quarter, and the sound drifted past them on the perfumed wind. He roused himself, and took her faithful hands in his, and looked into her face.

"Marie, God knows how dear you are to me through this. It seems to me as if the old days had come back to us, when you were first my wife. I struggled then, with you by me, sweetheart; you've given me heart to strive again. God bless your true soul, little woman, as I bless these loving eyes!"

As he had done in taking leave of her, he raised her face within his hands, bright with the moonlight and her joyful tears, and tenderly kissed her eyelids.

Hickson had left her mistress; it was midnight by the clock.

Gladys was pacing the length of her apartment; the supple white silks of her loose robe falling about her and trailing soundlessly; her hair was shaken down and spread a glistening web about her shoulders. Her step was silent: the mirror of Venice reflected her as she passed down the room's length and returned, her

double receding into its distance, and advancing, as she came, with deep, unquiet eyes which looked beyond her as if they saw some unnamed thing that followed her. In passing under the lamp of silver, its light slid down the falling silks in luminous pale drifts and showed her brows and half-bared arms like marble. She seemed the spirit of unrest, haunting where night quiet should have been; one with the troubled sounding of the sea.

Time passed.

A casement stood open through which the night wind came, bringing the perfume of flowers blended with breaths off the waters where the gardens ceased. To Gladys, the deep night calm was stifling; she listened for her mother's coming. There was only the sounding of the sea.

A tall Dutch clock in the great hall of the house sent up a deep-toned, lingering chime. Strange light echoes started like winged things, and lost themselves upon the silence. Gladys heard the sound of a light step coming; she was no longer alone. Mrs. Varian passed up the long room towards her, and took her two hands in her own. There was a silence as they looked into each other's eyes. Gladys closed hers for an instant as one might under a falling blow.

"Tell me," she said, slowly, "is it as you feared?"

"Dear, be brave. We must give up everything. O, my Gladys, it is for your sake that I grieve!"

"My little lady," the girl said, very calmly, looking down with shadowed eyes. "You and my father are my loved ones, my home, my all. To endure with you, and help you to endure, will make a happiness of this. Could I be sad beside you both?"

Mrs. Varian looked at her a moment, tightening her

grasp convulsively. Her shining robe fell about Gladys like a symbol of purity; the dim sheet of the mirror rose behind her; above her calm brows, grandly serene, the bright hair caught subtle radiance like a glory. For a minute, the older woman regarded her timidly, with a certain awe. Then the two were in each other's arms.

"My angel!" cried the mother, clinging fast to her.

At last Gladys gently put aside her hands. "Go back to him, dear; he needs your comforting. And tell him from me that this shall draw us nearer each other than we have ever been. And do not be sad for me, for I am happy."

Her mother went slowly away, and left her where she stood. As the door closed, silence fell dense; like a cloud, stifling even the sounding of the sea. She stood there, whiter than marble and as still. Then she staggered, and fell upon her knees by the Venetian glass. Her hands bound her aching brows; she raised a great unspoken prayer in her agony.

"O God of the suffering, give me but strength! Help me to hold to this. . . ." And as she prayed, the face of Gerard passed before her, distinct, his eyes upon her.

The exceeding pain in her seemed to rise like fire, and blinded her.

"He is lost to me—forever—forever—." The thought gathered like a mighty sound, and beat its tune upon the stillness; a dusk cloud rolled before her sight, her senses reeled; she seemed to sink through immeasurable dark and space, his face above her.

A minute later the door of the room slid open: Hickson entered swiftly, and knelt beside Gladys where

she had fallen, touching the cold flesh of her wrist and throat.

"It's genuine, sure," she muttered, briefly. "We must give up everything! eh? Well, this shows me it must be pretty bad." She laid down the inert white hand, and rose, and stood beside her. Crossing her arms on her breast she looked at her, and spoke to her unhearing ears. "At last—! This is a revenge. Your sun has set, and mine is rising!" She ground her strong teeth in mingled exultation and fierce hate. "Your path and his go different ways, from this. Good night, my pretty one!"

CHAPTER VII.

BETWEEN THE ACTS.

MRS. BELMORE was a rich hostess, if not an accomplished one. Without the faculty of amusing her guests she had the facilities for entertaining them. By the laws of compensation, with her position took the place of charm and fashion that of beauty. Her house was admired rather than her conversation; her emeralds rather than the figure they adorned. However, amongst women very few can distinguish sycophancy from regard, and Mrs. Belmore, so long as her world eat her excellent dinners and attended her receptions, retained her natural state of confidence in her own abilities and consequent content. The badge of the army of Mediocrity is a large and invulnerable self-complacency: Genius, which knows its own insignificance before the vast heights of possible art, is the antithesis of Mediocrity with which itself represents the beginning and end while the universe appears an incident. Her little world, which the Idol of the Emeralds bitted with gold and reined with influence, driving it so, as she did her phaeton-horse, was the paradise of Mediocrity, and acknowledged her its queen. Neither she nor it comprehended the satire latent in this fact.

"I think there really ought to have been an eleventh commandment against stock-gambling," said Mrs. Loftus Scaler, whose opaque prosaic eyes expressed a certain alarmed self-interest. "The other things we

are warned against are distinctly wicked but not so obvious: they can be kept out of sight and therefore do not give so much scandal. Besides, cashiers and clerks and people often get such ideas; and that's how banks are broken. One really feels quite nervous about one's investments in these times."

"We lost a hundred thousand, Charlie told me, the other day; but of course that's just a straw to us," said Mrs. Belmore, pleasantly. "All because of a sort of regular conspiracy, I should think from what he says, something quite like a Gunpowder Plot, you know. Wall street was almost turned upside down. I believe Mr. Greme had a great deal to do with it; of course he's a very clever man, and one invites him and his son to dinner—and—so on, but—"

"My dear Mrs. Belmore," said the dowager severely; "I can't see how men have ever made out the difference between fooling people, as they do in Wall street, and being a—dear me!—a bunco sharp." On certain occasions Mrs. Scaler's original business shrewdness appeared; contrasting with her superb attire while notably in keeping with her astute pale eye.

"What a medieval, I think I may say Arcadian, sensation one enjoys in hearing a spade called by its urgent earthy name," Hartshorn interpolated, leisurely, with a fine glance towards the speaker. "Some have the faculty of making the tool so keen as to resemble the knife of satire. Truth is a handsome grindstone, and proves the edges of most steels, however elaborate their handles are."

"Good plain speaking, that every Christian person can understand, beats the word twisting of—" Mrs. Loftus Scaler promptly answered, when her hostess broke in:

"Dear Mrs. Scaler, I think it would be such a nice time now—only you and I and Mr. Hartshorn together—and he is just like a—like a grandfather—if it wouldn't trouble you, I should be so glad—its earache *is* so bad, and your experience would help me *so* much; I've told nurse to bring it down when I ring twice. I'm sure you won't mind, Mr. Hartshorn?"

Mrs. Belmore rose and rang the bell, and dropped her fan in returning which required its restoration by Hartshorn, after which she sat down and found some ribbon ends amongst her laces that she frayed out of countenance at once. She had breathlessly interposed this by-play to divert her two old friends, the most elegant and polished man and the most determined woman of her world, from one of those pungent passages of arms which she often said "really made her head swim." Hartshorn's wit was one of the dreaded mysteries of the gods; Mrs. Scaler had enough penetration to fear while too hardy-natured to avoid it. The hostess, who cultivated her nerves at times, averted the encounter unconsciously, not by her innocent matronly request of Mrs. Scaler, but by overwhelming the astonished Hartshorn with his near resemblance to a grandfather. He took his leave with infinite courtliness. "I think I may consider myself dismissed. In this age, to be a grandfather, is most generally to be —*de trop*." He smiled superbly at the ladies, casting an inscrutable glance across the arched bridge of his nose; and left them profoundly disconcerted.

"Really, Mr. Hartshorn has a way of saying such odd, unheard-of things that it quite makes me think he has some little tinge of eccentricity. Genius allied to —hem! you recollect that nice line of the poet's, Mrs. Belmore?" Mrs. Scaler's eye grew very bright; she felt

some inward exultation that the lonely fragment of polite quotation she had acquired in her business and private life should have assisted her to attack a man whose wit offended her less than his high-breeding.

Mrs. Belmore hardly regarded her words; she sat staring into Hartshorn's abandoned chair, pulling some handsome lace apart which she mistook for ribbon. The sound of a healthy baby's remonstrances on a large ascending scale escaped her; she looked at the empty chair with absolute desperation.

"To think I was ever born to say such a thing to Jesse B. Hartshorn! A grandfather!—grandfather! why, I might as well have called him hippopotamus at once. The most influential, distinguished, popular, witty man in Newport, and not much more than fifty! I've done what those Chinese creatures do—*hari-kari*—to themselves, and I'll never hear or see the end of it. He won't come and help me out at my dinner-parties any more, and he and Caprice will literally take and flay me alive between them!"

Mrs. Scaler enjoyed to a degree the trepidation of her friend and received the baby with a courteous attention, inspection and admiration which presently soothed the poor young matron into forgetfulness of her catastrophe. Mrs. Belmore was treating the infant to spoonsful of sweetened cream over which it chuckled from the depths of its being after showing fight at each spoon that advanced, when a footman announced:

"Mr. and Mrs. Van Blancken and Mr. Burrall Greme."

"Oh, goodness gracious! take it away, nurse!" ejaculated the hostess under her breath, recalling Hartshorn with a violent pang, and spilling the last load of cream abr[illegible]

Caprice, followed by the gentlemen, advanced with her usual *insouciant* grace.

("Though she says she is English, I always think she's more like French or some sort of foreigner. Why can't she look like the rest of us?") thought the Idol of the Emeralds, in welcoming her. She showed an added cordiality, indirect atonement for her destructive blunder, reflecting, as she shook hands with Van Blancken: "I do wish Charlie was just as awfully foolish over me as she has kept her husband. Some men are too absurdly silly to know the value of a wife of my type." After this, conversation recommenced.

"I suppose now poor Mr. Varian will just drop out of society like a puff of smoke, as the dear witty Viscount is so fond of saying," commenced Mrs. Belmore, engagingly. "Such a pity—that beautiful girl; and his wife—such a dreadful fall in position!"

"I remember the time when Mrs. Varian considered herself an arbiter of position—for herself and every one else," rejoined Mrs. Loftus Scaler, grimly. "Dear me,—such is life!"

"'Specially high life," put in Burrall Greme. "That's what men always do who've busted, make a plunge clean down out of sight, and wait till the clouds roll by."

Van Blancken, who had met him at Mrs. Belmore's doors, glanced at his sharp face dubiously.

"I wish I'd got a brain like Caprice," he thought, "I'd heat some bricks for that young bear to dance on."

"I think, considering the acknowledged basis of American society, that Wall street, with its swift catastrophes, is a formidable institution." Caprice spoke with a delicate smile. "I often tell Belmont I tolerate

his stables because they don't absorb more than half his income, while stocks demand a man's capital, interest, credit, brain and occasionally his reputation. I think your leader, Kelpie, is a safer pet than Chicago and Great Western?"

"It is my opinion that stocks are like nothing so much as—dear me!—rattlesnakes. They make a great deal of noise but, like the reptile, it doesn't show which way they're going."

"That's so," exclaimed Burrall Greme, very readily "And fellows can't cure themselves with whisky, either though plenty of them try."

"Talking of stocks, the Viscount tells me he bought some Excelsior from Archie Ambleon, and made a splendid thing of it. Archie had sold it out and out—what does Charlie call it?—'cash.' He thought no more about it till that afternoon they were all at the Windsor, and spoke of Excelsior having risen—oh so high! The dear Viscount is so quick and clever; he rushed down town, and sold at once, and made enough, as he said, in a day, to buy cigars for a month and pay the *coupé*. He was so funny, you know, about the *coupé*. I suppose the hackman found out he was English. He said the fare would have bought the cab!" Mrs. Belmore giggled sweetly.

"When does he mean to go back home?" enquired Burrall, looking at Mrs. Van Blancken. Caprice disregarded this point blank volley, and directed an oblivious glance beyond him.

"I think he's captured—quite, you know," said Mrs. Belmore, picking at her ribbons coyly. "Those weddings are so fashionable now—English bridegroom and American bride. The society papers do make such pretty accounts of them,—first put down his

pedigree, and then the price of her *trousseau*. So tastefully appropriate, you know."

"Yes," replied Caprice, with languor, "that is a custom of the country, I believe."

"That girl has green eyes to beat your emeralds, Mrs. Belmore," said Burrall Greme, with candor. "I wonder she don't buy a set like yours (she's money enough) to match them."

Mrs. Belmore assumed a full-fleshed majesty of look profoundly impressive when observed against the background of her wealth and social might. Her emeralds, the unapproachable *parure*—!

"My dear Mr. Greme—!" she said.

He was about to commit himself further, when Mrs. Loftus Scaler rose to take her leave. He seized his opportunity and left (in front of her), and soon after this Mrs. Belmore found herself alone.

"Really," she meditated, "I think it proves that there's something in old blood. The dear Viscount never says such things as Burrall Greme and Charlie do!"

CHAPTER VIII.

FALLING LEAVES.

THE sets of the Newport season were breaking up; a contingent of pioneers had already made their way to Lenox. It was September. The summer had gone past.

The Varian cottage was closed; Tom Varian had brought his wife and daughter to New York.

The Newport boat swung into her dock; morning sunlight flooded the waters, and struck broad rays down the eastern-fronting streets; gleaming on wharves and warehouses and swarming tenements there; evoking bright contrasts from women's poor and different colored dress-stuffs as they went; and shining bravely on the cars of the avenue lines as their sides, painted yellow, blue, green, white and orange, slid past the openings of the streets. The lower part of the city was alive; full of innumerable conflicting sounds, of gradually augmenting activity. The great fly-wheel had begun to turn; the pressure would continue till night.

Two carriages followed each other up Broadway; one contained Varian, his wife and Gladys; the second Hickson, and was loaded with luggage. During the long slow drive they were silent; in this return there was a profoundness of melancholy which overcame them. Each felt it would be irony to pretend indifference at this time, though resolute to keep up the aspect of courage with which they sought to reassure each other; and there was silence between them.

They were met by the tide of morning business and industry pouring down Broadway, to flow by City Hall Square and disperse in waves through the great commercial district round that centre. The leaves of the trees there which had glistened in the August morning sun, when an unknown woman died just beyond the limits of their shade, were growing slowly yellowed, and dropped down reluctantly to fade.

The great stores and edifices flanking Broadway were passed; the vehicles turned, by the skirt of Union Square, where Washington seems to direct from his bronze charger's saddle the army of foot and horse below, into Fourth avenue. Past the old Everett and the successive villas, with weedy gardens and eloquent gate-posts; by the celebrated "Church of the Holy Zebra," whose streaked and inartistic aspect has long been characterized by a single phrase of satire; leaving behind the block of dusty second-hand small houses terminating in the plate-glass windows of a druggist's store, and which seemed in want of some sort of architectural tonic beyond physic to compound; down Twenty-third street, by the range of brown stone fronts that reach to Madison Square; and along the wide base of the avenue there, where leaf-shadows fell tremulous on the cobblestones.

The sun had climbed higher; the light of the maturing day was bright on the flashing windows as they passed; the few trees along the street's quiet sidewalk caught its glory on their higher branches, and flung it from flickering leaf to leaf.

The two dark vehicles bound for the Varian mansion were alone on the avenue. There was something sombre in their spiritless procession; the horses were jaded and went slow. Still there was silence in the

first carriage, though Gladys recognized the familiar approach and an added sense of dull strong pain came to her heavily. The driver checked his tired beasts, and rang the bell apathetically, presently opening the carriage door, as a servant appeared in reply. Varian met his wife's eyes as Gladys alighted and entered the house; she touched his hand with a light pressure. "Be courageous; remember what she said herself that night, Tom; we love each other and we are together."

"Though you forgive me, I can't forgive myself. Marie, I'll never rest till I bring you back to the dear old home again."

His wife's lips quivered; her curved lids dropped to hide the added brightness of sprung tears. His fervent look faded like a flickering quenched light; he followed her into the house.

Gladys had entered the drawing-room, where her grand piano stood silent and the unwound clock looked down. There was something indescribably desolate and hopeless here, suggesting the very spirit of regret: to her full of broken memories and ghosts of a banished time. The strain was heavy on her fortitude; forbidden tears ached under her eyelids, but remained unshed.

This first moment of return, when the imminent constraint of anxious eyes was on her, grew intolerable in its pain. Though she forced herself to a semblance of calm, the tense line of her brows and mouth grew rigid under her control, and assumed, without her knowledge, the expression she sought to master. Endeavoring faithfully to preserve her aspect of confidence, she suppressed the despair which grew in her. Everywhere her eyes met things of old association, straining her endurance with unnumbered wounds;

she dared not trust herself to look about: her strength must fail her under this.

Finally there was quiet in the house. Hickson had seen the trunks disposed, and came to announce that the ladies' rooms were ready.

"Let Hickson help you, mother," said Gladys; "I will manage by myself." She followed Mrs. Varian up the staircase, holding by the balustrade, and entered her own apartment. Giving a single look around it she was closing the tall door, whose panels tinted with the rose and faint gold hangings of the room, when she felt a slow, soft rub against her ankle, and heard a cat's supplicating mew. A diminutive yellow beast was at her feet; a pair of clear amber eyes were looking up towards her with mild affection, little white paws wove softly at the carpet, in favorite feline obeisance; and a large supple tail stood erect with rings of deeper yellow on the pale.

Gladys looked down a moment blankly at the innocent welcome of his shining eyes; she heard the familiar little deprecating whine, unlike the voices of the run of cats. He turned again and rubbed his other side against her patiently. Then, with a choked sob, Gladys lifted him into her arms and locked the door. Placing him on the lace spread of the bed, which he gathered up in his continued weaving, the girl threw herself face down beside him, and sobbed heavily against his warm and purring shape.

Ten days followed this of intolerable brilliant skies, of bright dawns, and deep starred heavens at night. Varian's affairs in Wall street occupied him incessantly: the Madison avenue residence was advertised to let, and Mrs. Varian was searching amongst the

number of apartment and flat houses known in New York for a new home suited to their crippled means. Gladys was left alone.

Her life had become very full of pain; but by strong governance of the soul its wearing traces were suppressed. She was a thousand times resolved to do the thing she had set herself to do: in calming the fears of her father and mother regarding the catastrophe's effect upon herself, she felt a constantly augmenting strength to endure and be their consolation.

During the long days she was much alone, and never left the house. Often as the afternoon was waning, she took her place in the drawing-room, listening for her father's footstep on the stoop, when she would go to welcome him.

The little yellow beast was about her always, thrilling his sides with subtle purring; coiled in her lap when she sat alone and watched the slow turn of the clock-hands and the sad tints of the falling leaves. And if she went to the grand piano, and put him off her knee, he would stand a while beside her idly, looking up with blinking amber eyes. After a little speculation there he would give a peculiar inquiring tremulous sound, reach her lap with a spring of his small well-gathered quarters, and delicately treading the key-board as he went, dispose himself on a scarf of rich embroidered Eastern silk flung there. This he fretted with his penetrating claws, which slipped to and fro the softly sheathing fur in slow and exquisite content.

Gladys found in the instrument the chiefest solace of the time. The music of Chopin, full of eternal lamentation, soothed her like a soul's response to the speechless pain of her soul. Spanish mazurkas, wild, sombre, but phrased with tenderness, of which the

motifs were infinitely weird, full of haunting harmonies; fragments of Schumann, bold as the sounding of a forest storm, or blending to inexpressible perfections of caressing; these, the old music of those days of her life which had receded beyond her hold into the past, softened the bare hours now.

Ten days had passed of intolerable brilliant skies; of bright dawns and deep-starred heavens at night. Gladys, whose sleep was fitful, had watched the moon set and the mighty star-steeds of the Wain path the night-sky and take their way beyond the dawn. In the parks the hand of time had touched the trees, saddening the places where they grew with their decay. The autumn leaves were forever falling, from the trees, as hopes drop out of life, into the deep grass where the dew hung, as hopes drop into the past where there are tears.

The eleventh day was dull with lowering clouds; there was a hoarse din from the river, of fog-horns and whistles choked with mist; rain-drops hung upon the telegraph wires, and dripped off the shades of the messengers' caps to their faces and down their oil-skin overalls.

Mrs. Varian, in her closed brougham, had insisted on continuing her search for an apartment, and her husband, as usual, had started down-town. Gladys remained, and passed the hours till midday with an old forgotten book of poems, her hand on the warm stretch of yellow fur upon her lap, where Sandy, sleeping, purred fitfully between his dreams. Mrs. Varian did not return to luncheon, so the girl eat companioned by the little beast, wheedling for morsels with his eloquent whine, and showing small teeth like odd-shaped pearls. There was something pathetic in this fellow-

ship and scene; the dining-room in which, each winter, a series of magnificent dinners had been given, celebrated by society as only second to those of Jesse B. Hartshorn in perfection, passing into other hands than the generous and lavish Varian's, and holding the young girl with her tenderly-sad face, alone but for the only creature that had welcomed her desolate return.

When she had eaten, or rather finished feeding the insatiable yellow Epicurean at her feet, Gladys returned to her chair in the drawing-room, resuming the old print of poems. Large seldom drops of rain were falling, through soft warm air. Something of the spirit of the year-worn tome's forgotten rondels and ballads came to her, like the faint scent that drifts up from an old box of mementos. These things appealed to her in their turns of wit and tenderness; lingering unknown, relics of the long past. They carried her back across a century; she dreamed, with the vellum covers shut, and seemed to be where this old book had been, in the past, which had carried away its tears, its hopes, its joys, its hours and days, and left this memory behind. In her mind it was infinitely vague and sad, these few leaves bound together, yellowed and aged like the falling autumn leaves, with the touch of many dead hands on them, and the regard of many long-closed eyes. She turned the pages back to where a faded ribbon marked the place; there was a French refrain like the sound of the grieving wind at night. "*Où sont les neiges d'antan?*" An indefinable thrill went through her: "*Où sont les neiges d'antan?*" The rain was falling again with a dull sound; her own past seemed to mix with the saddened voices of the song. The line was the refrain of her heart forever. *Où sont les neiges d'antan?*"

Varian came back from business ten minutes before his wife returned. When Mrs. Varian entered, finding Gladys and her father together in the gathering shadows of the drawing-room, her face was bright and hopeful, though there were tired lines around her mouth.

"Well, Tom, are you home? I am so glad. I have good news for both of you, I think. It is so dark and dreary in here, I am going to order some tea to be brought to our room. I will send you word to come up there when it's ready, and hear my news."

"All right, Marie," said Varian, cheerfully. "Your pluck ought to be rewarded by this time." She smiled to him over her shoulder in answer as she left the room.

"Dear little lady," murmured Gladys, softly, looking after her.

Later, father and daughter left the shadowy room together and found Mrs. Varian, in a loose silk robe, smiling them welcome by her bright tea equipage. They took their places near the silver tray, and drew around her lovingly. She recognized it with a happy look mingled with pretty pride and tenderness. There was a blush of color on her face.

"Well, little woman, and what have you to tell us?" asked Varian, with more cheeriness of voice and eye than he had shown since the day of the catastrophe.

"First you must break your old habit of being unsociable and take some tea, to please me, or I shall not feel happy, Tom," she answered, holding out a cup to him. "And we must all try and feel happy to-day. I think I have found a home, dear."

There was something in the words, spoken here amongst the souvenirs of the home they were leaving, that brought sudden tears to her eyes. She stooped in

caressing the importunate yellow visage at her knee, and filling a saucer with tea from her own cup, set it down beside her.

"He always used to care for tea more than for cream alone," she murmured, still looking down at the bars of pale and darker color on his quivering little shape, where he crouched and delicately lapped.

"Come, Marie, what is the place like, little woman? Anywhere near this part of town?"

She raised her face again.

"Well, Tom, no. It's on an old square near Second avenue, in that part of the city where the rich Dutch used to live and where there are fine old houses still. There is a church with two spires, across the park; you look towards it from the windows of our rooms—I think, Tom, they will be ours!—and the apartment has a separate basement below. That is such a great thing; you cannot understand how I dreaded having those people always on the same floor as ourselves! The rooms are high and large; there is a suite which will be drawing-room and music-room, with tall windows looking out upon the square, and little arched side windows, too. I stood there while the sun was setting, and watched the last rays strike past the church and through the yellow leaves of the trees, and straight down the long room to the end, like a smile of welcome, I thought, dear."

"We will go and see it together to-morrow with Gladys. Shall we?" said Varian, looking from one to the other of them with a smile. "And now I have something to tell you in return. I have almost arranged my affairs on the Street, and find myself worth fifty thousand dollars clear. In a short while I shall start again, not as an operator, but as a broker; and

the prospects are good, I think. Any way, I can but trust to God and try. When a man has two such brave little souls as you two women to depend on him and give him courage, he has double hope and strength."

Mrs. Varian rose with an impulsive movement and kissed him upon his temple by the hair. She slipped down, half crouching, beside his chair, and laid her two hands on his arm.

"Tom, Tom, how can we help being brave, when it's for you?"

Varian turned his eyes from his wife's eloquent face to the luminous smile of Gladys.

"I am a happier man to-night, I think, than I've ever been."

CHAPTER IX.

SALLIE JEWEL, OF THE BIJOU.

ELIZA HICKSON received her dismissal before Mrs. Varian left the old residence. Gladys had urged this. She could not endure the idea of exposing to her former servant the extreme reverse of her fortunes. She divined acutely the unaltering truth, that in elevated minds misfortune evokes compassion; in lower ones a kind of coarse contempt. Hickson received a handsome *douceur*, and dropping out of her life completely, left no trace behind.

Since the night of Varian's return, Hickson had been deliberating continually, and had formulated a plan of action, foreseeing her impending dismissal. Taking advantage of the absence of Mrs. Varian and Gladys' absolute indifference, she occupied several afternoons in private excursions of importance to her object. She visited a theatrical *coiffeur* near the Star Theatre. The shop had a dingy window and narrow entrance on Fourth avenue; as Hickson opened the door, which responded with a sharp gong stroke announcing a customer, she felt a new thrill of self-complacency and elation at her qualities of enterprise. Her pulse leaped, and an excited color rushed into her cheeks. A young man appeared, in whose aspect she was confusedly conscious of black boldly-speculative eyes, and superbly clustering curls. Hickson was overcome by novel and hastening impressions; she lost control of her

expression, and exposed the eager curiosity she felt. The fellow's regard roved over her and took on a shade of insolent amusement.

"Fresh," he commented briefly, as he asked what she required.

"I want to get some rouge that one can put on easily," she answered, with an inimitable touch of self-conscious vanity in her tone; "what they use for the stage, you know." At the same time she looked at the furnishings of the store with a glow of exultation and delight. There were wigs of imposing aspects and diversified perfections upon stands; innumerable bottles and vials were visible, pomatums, rouges, creams, essences, professional preparations to be applied to the skin before making up for the stage; liquids with mysterious colorings and labels; packets of perfumed and tinted toilet powder; and within a dim show case photographs of comic, dramatic and variety performers. These portraits chained her attention at once. She fixed especially on that of a blonde *coryphée* with ethereal draperies and a great spread fan of ostrich plumes, whose distinguishing audacity of expression caught her unpracticed eye with immediate attraction.

"Who is this?" she asked with an assumption of ease, as the salesman set some gaudily gotten up pots of rouge on the glass of the show case, dull with numberless fine scratches. He leaned over and glanced down amongst the scattered photographs below.

"This one with tights and a fan?" he asked carelessly. "Don't you know of her?—She's Sallie Jewel, of the Bijou. You wanted this kind of rouge, didn't you?" he added with a broad smile.

Hickson examined the pots he had set down with an

air of connoisseurship. "I mustn't let him think I'm at sea about it, or—what is this called?"

"Teint de Venus—its just what you're wanting—suits your complexion to a T. By the way, perhaps you're going to try the stage? No offence meant, you know." He lounged with a casual elbow on the show case, and played his brilliant glances over her.

Hickson considered for a moment; this was the opening she wanted. She changed her front, assumed an engaging smile, and looked up at him innocently.

"Perhaps I shall, I don't know yet. Isn't it a very pleasant life?"

"Well—that depends, you see; if you're a go-ahead girl you might get on as Sallie Jewel did. She knows the value of money and never takes discount off in life. That's the secret. Brass and beauty. It brings her along, you know."

He looked at Hickson keenly as he ceased, and smiled. "Are you going in for this kind of thing—the variety line—yourself?"

"I think so. It's quite the easiest and most attractive, isn't it?—more so than tragedy—?"

"If you want to stop in the chorus it is. You make a beginning by looking pretty, but you keep it up by brains. You'll never find hunting a living over easy, however you go to do it, though there's more sky-rockets and ice-cream in this than you'll get out of other callings."

"How soon do they put one's pictures in the shops," asked Hickson, with an expectant smile.

"This year, next year, sometime, never. It depends on how much of a hit you make," grinned the salesman, twirling his moustache. "If you happened to get on the right side of the manager you'd have

things smoothed up a little bit; but every manager can't be fooled with a pretty face; they're a long-headed set."

Hickson averted her eyes from the stare of a waxen dummy near by, whose regulation simper struck her as containing an element of objectionable facetiousness.

"Well," she said, with some sullenness, "I want to get on in the world, and I'm going to do it. I don't expect the managers will be dead set against me—?" she added, flushing, with an accent of bravado.

"Not a bit of 'em, if I'm a pattern: you know—you're—a very pretty girl."

Her color rose a little higher; she fitted her cheap lisle thread gloves where they ruckled down and bared the wrist; and complacently dropped her eyelids. Her opinion of herself, which had suffered some dismay, was recovering its ordinary elation. He noted these symptoms with considerable amusement, as trade was slack and time hung on his hands, and waited with relish for the rejoinder. Hickson found the moment opportune.

"Don't you think you could tell me the address of a few theatrical boarding-houses?—where I should meet people like this—you know—" She looked down at the lot of photographs; a very promiscuous assortment.

"Why, certainly,—I can tell you where Sallie puts up, if you want."

"Please do," said Hickson, with a finely-calculated flash of her black eyes into his. "You see I'm quite alone here, and it would be so nice and kind of you—"

He took up a scrap of paper from the floor and scrawled a short address on Twenty-sixth street. As his head of glistening curls bent down, a coarse perfume came from it. Hickson, in rapture, conceived the idea of buying a "cologne" for her own improvement.

"But this is close up to Broadway—it must be quite a mansion! You know I don't want much expense at first—"

"Oh, don't take on; their prices ain't so high as you might think; and besides, you get the advantage of choice theatrical company all the while. The landlady's connected with the profession; her husband was a scene-shifter once upon a time. Bet your boots you'll get along if you go there!—by the way, I hope you'll let me call!"

Hickson assumed an air of elegant provocation: "I really can't tell you—I shall have to see when you try—it's rather an informal thing." She had caught the phrase from Mrs. Varian.

"All right, we'll see about it, won't we?" he answered with an insinuating grin.

Hickson felt an added self-importance, a consummate tickling of conceit.

"If I get on all the time as well as this, I'm bound to win! Well," she remarked, with inimitable negligence, having made sure in her own mind of her conquest, "it's getting late, and I can't waste any more time; please put up this one for me. What is the price of it?"

"Sallie uses this all the while," he answered, with business briskness and spirit. "It's the best sort on the market, and makes 'em up like a flight of little angels. By the way, now, don't you put much on at a time; your own color's too pretty to hide, by a long chalk." He executed another and undaunted leer, and handed her the packet. "Good-bye," he said. "Glad to have met you. By the way, you haven't given me the chance to come and get the bounce: you didn't tell me your name, you know."

Hickson's eyes met his in a lingering sidelong look as she turned to leave the store. "He's awfully handsome and looks quite swell. I just hate giving him the horrid old name, Eliza Hickson. And I'll have to make up a different one for the theatre, a *nom de broom*, anyway. Ask for Miss Celestine Lovelight," she said, with a little air, and smiled.

In another moment she had left the store and was hurrying up Fourth avenue in pursuit of a fast-going car. The lamps were lighting on the streets; twilight had come; Hickson whispered the name to herself in time with the exultant beating of her heart.

"We'll see," she thought, as she boarded the crowded car, and hung on to a strap beside a negro Daniel Lambert. "We'll see! A girl like me isn't made to tie the shoe-strings of those that aren't neither as clever nor as pretty as themselves." The grammar of her reflections grew a little mingled as the car crossed the lines of a ferry-road, but she swelled with elation, defiance and pride. "We'll see! I was made for something more than that. This is a good day's work, and I'll make the most of it or know the reason why!"

A fortnight later, Hickson moved into the fourth story hall bedroom back on Twenty-sixth street, lighted the gas, for it was growing dark, and surveyed the place with the air of a conqueror. A small black box, studded with brass nailheads and corded with a frayed length of rope, stood reflecting a twinkle on each knob of brass in a manner slyly congratulatory. There was a bureau with a dull old mirror, that never let you have the full benefit of your beauty; a deal wash-stand, painted for bird's-eye maple, with lively finishings of scarlet; a bed

of such discouraged and misanthropic aspect that it seemed to be especially calculated for a death-bed, and took a pleasure in the fact; a chair with a number of rungs as if made for one who had a habit of tucking his heels up. The wall-paper was of retiring characteristics, being of a foggy grey, with a wavering rain-drop or watered-silk pattern: however, innumerable former boarders had combined to give it a livelier aspect round the gas-jet, where long bronze tracks indicated the striking of many sulphur matches, and one could perceive a blue and black arabesque of wax lights and casual fusees.

Hickson, however, gave herself very little time for examination, and none for criticism of her new shelter; for the multifarious strong food-odors of approaching dinner reached her significantly, She uncorded her meagre box, threw up the lid which was weak on its hinges, and plunged into an indescribable chaos imprisoned there. She dragged up from the bottom a dress of tarnished wine-red velvet, whose creases covered its surface with the effect of an old beau's wrinkles; beauty was gone, but the *debonnair* elegance of former perfections could not be annihilated. Tossing this on the bed behind her, she threw up the rest of the articles within, as a dog does in digging a sequestered bone, and finally fished up a *fichu* of yellowed Spanish lace, after which she jammed the lid down. The brass nailed box wheezed with a plethoric sound, and did its best to hold together.

Hickson's head was light with dizzy anticipations and a buoyant sense of freedom, adventure and novelty. She turned the gas so high that it screamed from the burner, and forced her to moderate the pressure; flung off her old black dress, and mantle which was

finished with thin bonnet-silk; and pausing as if she had forgotten something at the instant of putting on the tumbled velvets, hastily fell on the brass nailed box again. This time a night-garment surged to the surface, and an exhausted length of soiled cotton ribbon. Folding the first a couple of times and tying the ribbon at the middle, so forming securely a formidable bustle, she slung the whole around her waist. Then she arranged the emancipated velvets, a souvenir of Gladys' liberality, and tied the lace *fichu* about her neck in an imposing bow at the chin. Finally she raised the quaint brooch her mistress had given her the night of the Newport ball, the face of the quarter-moon in gold, and fixed it carefully rather to the side. She recalled in astounding irreconcilable contrasts, the graceful modes of Gladys; and met the eye of the quarter-moon with a look of renewed malignity. He had lately developed a sort of inscrutable irony of expression, indefinably weird, fanciful and irritating—in her eyes. In fact, he provoked her to absurd extremities; connected with many associations, he seemed endowed with an actual consciousness; she felt, regarding him, an unaccountable and freakish mingling of repugnance and derision.

"It's the face of an imp," she muttered. "And uncanny. He looks as though he'd like to bring me bad luck. Besides he came from her. But I'm bound to win!"—she repeated her favorite phrase with defiance. "I'm bound to win!"

The jingling of a shrill hand-bell penetrating through the house like a whistle, sent a flush of scarlet to her cheeks and a rapid lightning of extreme excitement to her eyes. She surveyed herself for a moment exultantly and was about turning down the gas when—

"The rouge! I've never put it on!" she cried, speaking out in her profound dismay and eagerness. "Oh mercy! I'll be late!"

However, she plucked open the plethoric box again, and this time leaving half the contents on the floor, applied the "Teint de Venus" to her cheeks. She had experimented previously with it in order to attain the knack with ease, and in two minutes had it to her satisfaction.

"How perfectly elegant it makes one look!—like a regular fashionable lady!" she gasped, to her reflection, and began a flight downstairs.

"How de do, my dear!" cried a hearty voice as she entered the dining-room, having modified her pace on the last flight of stairs and come into the *salle à manger* with an air. "How do you find yourself flourishing upstairs? You'll see I always love to think my family are just so snug and comfortable; and, as I'm bent on making 'em feel it, this is known as Blandy's Liberty Hall!"

Hickson, or Celestine Lovelight, as she was now known to the world, stopped short, stared down an empty table, and encountered the jolly twinkling eyes of a monstrously fat old woman. She had an elbow planted on each side of a towering pile of plates; two flourishing double chins gave her an excessively well-to-do expression. Her eyes, of a penetrating grey, were large and comically prominent, and gave one the idea that they were perpetually endeavoring to peep at each other over the low wall of her indescribable nose. She wore a voluminous gown of cherry satin, like some burly personage in pantomime, and a pair of large rings hung in her ears, flashing and swinging this way and that.

"I'm sure, Mrs. Blandy, I'm very happy here," said Celestine in an agreeable voice. "I'm afraid I've come down rather early," she added, with a glance down the table flanked by a brigade of empty chairs, before each of which a knife, fork and spoon were thrown down all together on the cloth, while a ponderous goblet and an individual butter garnished the right and left hand corner.

"Come and sit here by me, my dear," answered Mrs. Blandy, with a cordial twinkle. "There, then, that's right! make yourself at home: my son sits opposite, and you see I'd like to have you know each other. He's one of the brightest young fellows I know and you're one of the prettiest girls. So you ought to get along, hey?" Celestine turned her head a little, smiled demurely, and made as if to blush. "I'm sure he must be bright if he's like you, Mrs. Blandy," she answered, softly.

At the moment the street door burst open and slammed, a chorus of voices filled the hall; there were some shouts of laughter and approaching footsteps; then three men entered noisily and took their seats.

"Aha! you naughty boys, you're generally later than all the rest of 'em put together: what's brought you home on time to-night?" As she finished she burst into an unexampled chuckle; several false teeth came out in prominent white, and the substantial rings at her ears quivered and flashed during the paroxysm as if they shared it with her. The three men each laughed in their separate characteristic ways, and one got up and went to the top of the basement stair shouting "Munch!" with exasperation at the pitch of his voice.

"Well, well, well," bustled out Mrs. Blandy, with a

final shake of her considerable person. "And after all I've forgotten good manners so far as to leave you unpresented. My goodness! Mr. Jerry Crœsus and Mr. Mandeville Branding, Miss Celestine Lovelight."

Here there was an altercation beyond the open door between the man who had left and a gruff voice.

"Munch, what the blazes d'you ring the bell for when you're going to keep a fellow's dinner from him down stairs ten minutes after he's piled in here to get it?"

"Misther Kershaw, sir, yez was niver plazed in yer loife by no wan, an' Oi'm not that shtuck-up t'expict to be the first."

"Hello, Munch, my love, are you mad? Shall your Jerry drown him in the soup-pot for you?" Crœsus exclaimed, with a fine tragic gesture after Edwin Booth, and a side glance of inimitable humor at the ladies.

"An' shure its thrue Oi wish ye'd make off wid him. His wake's the only part 'll iver be swate of him to others, at all, at all." And Munch, with a face like a blank wall in mourning and a settled fog of endurance and calamity in her voice, planted the soup tureen before her mistress and marched out like an embodied funeral.

"Jerry Crœsus, you wicked fellow, you're enough to set the poor creature off her head. She'll be taking you in earnest one day, and we'll have Bow and Bumble after you for breach of promise!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Jerry, as he got up to fetch his soup in the projected plaintiff's absence. "Munch knows rather more than that: or damages would have to be limited to a used-up neck-tie or a lock of hair. Any man of penetration would make out from my appearance that the name of Crœsus is an ironical label

denoting perennial bust-uppedness. When Munch goes to chewing opium, instead of snuff, tobacco-plugs and gum, she may get onto that delusion, not before."

Here there was the sound of a mixed company descending; a large, blonde, healthy-looking woman burst in, laughing immoderately; she had a pale small companion, in a floating white wrapper of coarse muslin, whose eyes, green and speculative, contained at the same time an expression of appeal. She was also laughing, quietly, with a peculiar slow smile; there was much deliberation about her. Behind them a couple of men came; one with fine originality of feature and imposing presence; the other giving an impression of some vulgarity and a latent coarseness with vacillation.

"Oh, my goodness! have you heard the last?" gasped the large blonde, falling into her chair. "The Chameleon Opera-bouffe Co. bursted up on the road near Phila., and all the chorus girls that hadn't baggage skipped and left their hotel bills. You know they've been playing there something like a fortnight, only drawing houses that barely covered expenses. Well, Jenny Cannon refused to play, for there was a day's pay coming to her, and Manager Bates was as mad as a hooked shark. And then a little chorus girl jumped at the chance and offered him to fill her part, as she had played it before. Do you suppose Jennie, pay or none, could stand by and let a chorus girl get her part? You bet! She played that night. But the worst thing was Alf Griscon got upon his ear and went to quarreling with Bates. Oh, my! I can just see them, and Bates is the biggest swearer north of Tennessee. By that time he had got to rooting out

his hair, but no amount of that kind of barbering would fill the house, you know. Then the orchestra, whose pay was in arrears, took up their fiddles and filed out; and finally Griscon just walked off with his clothes on over his stage things. They had to refund the money to the audience and close up. But that wasn't near the end of it—" she threw herself back in her chair, with a hand to her side, and laughed to suffocation. "When the poor little chorus girls were sent off with pay due them and a week's hotel bills owing, most of them, who hadn't any baggage, flitted; but half a dozen got left. The hotel clerk was waiting up to make right sure they didn't get out of the place, and their trunks were away upstairs. And what do you think those six girls did?" She looked around triumphantly, especially in the direction of the men. "I bet none of you fellows are cute enough to guess!"

"Chartered a private balloon?" conjectured Crœsus, speculatively.

"Pawned their diamonds?" inquired Kershaw, with sarcasm.

"Paid the bill? That's the simplest," said Mandeville Branding, with a little smile.

"Robert le Diable, that's just like you!" vociferated the large blonde. "Do you think I'd try to fool a whole set of people with such an ending-up as that? They got a clothes line, and let their trunks down to a man whom they had waiting in the dead of night, and got out by a back way themselves—there's cuteness for you! And the end of it all was, they boarded a freight train bound for New York, and got here this morning. I'd like to see the *man* who could have gotten off like that, ha! ha! Wouldn't you, Mrs. Blandy?"

"Little dears!" responded that lady affectionately, still shaking with the last tremors of enjoyment. "I always was so partial towards 'em ever since I was one myself. Yes, my dear, I was one of 'em myself, amongst the friskiest little lambs in the fold, and the neatest looking too!"

"The Misthruss was a shplindid figger of a woman," said Munch, with solemnity, handing the cabbage, "Iver senst Oi furrst sit oyes an her."

The large blonde burst into uproarious laughter, in which Jerry Crœsus kept her company, when the door was opened by a girl who entered and paused a second as she closed it behind her, glancing straight at Celestine with peculiar narrow eyes of a pale, elusive grey. Celestine recognized the face, smooth, fascinating, with a strange latent expression of cruelty, derision and *insouciance*. An inexplicable thrill shot through her, the electric intuition of encountering personalities: this was Sallie Jewel, of the Bijou.

"Sallie, you little lazy-bones," cried Mrs. Blandy, "you'll be late for your part if you don't hurry up. Let's see—bless my dear live soul! It's half past six and you come on in the first act, and got to eat your dinner and make up yet!"

A slight smile curved her lips in answer: they were thin but curled and delicately moulded: all her points were finished and fine.

"All right," she answered carelessly, "I sha'n't hurry, and I'll be on time. Only fools either hurry or are late." She quietly commenced her dinner.

"Everyone isn't as bright as you, Sallie," called out the husband of the lively blonde.

"Those who don't know enough to go ahead in life, without getting winded like a bad runner, are poor trash," she answered, contemptuously.

Celestine caught the phrase with an instant keen response and admiration. The dominant chord of her life was touched. "Oh, isn't that true!" she exclaimed with enthusiasm.

Sallie Jewel's eyes, long, narrow, of a glittering equivocal grey, looked again straight through her for an instant. There was a magnetism in the glance: Celestine felt a powerful increasing interest in her, like the fascination of a snake.

"We're of one opinion, we ought to be friends," she said, at length, with a smile. An intuition warned her of the impression she had created.

"To be sure you ought; I thought you'd get along together in the fulness of time, so God bless you my children!" With an unsurpassable grin and strut there entered Celestine's friend of the wig-store.

"Why dear bless me, how you scared me, Ed!" screamed Mrs. Blandy, her earrings palpitant. "One might a' thought it was the property rich uncle, that always comes on in the fifth act to give a million in gold to the scrapegrace nephy, and kiss the pretty girl!"

"Aha! ha!" laughed her promising son (for it was he). "Sorry I haven't the bag of cash, but I'll kiss the pretty girl if she'll let me; like a shot, eh, Miss Celestine?" he said, with a captivating grin.

"For shame, Ed," said the little woman in a coarse white muslin wrapper, a slow smile coming about her mouth. "You forget Miss —"

"Lovelight — why I never presented you, did I? I never *can* remember to stand on ceremony!" Mrs. Blandy fretted.

"You forget, Miss Lovelight doesn't know your ways as well as we do. I'm glad my husband isn't as downright naughty in his talk as you. Though when

it comes to practice—" the little woman sighed aggrievedly and blinked her languishing green eyes like a sick duck.

"Mignon!" whispered her husband with a slight contraction of his brows. "This is not dignified—"

"I don't care, Percy," whinged the little woman. "*You* talking of dignity — we all know what *you* are—"

The actor's fine physiognomy, massive, with grand brows and deep orbited eyes, clouded sternly. "Hush!" he said. "Is there no delicacy in you?"

"Shure an' Misther Iddy had us all toult about her, be jabers. Niver a cint's worth of pace in the ould house this fartni't past, wid his cuttins up about the gal he'd gone a did mash an down to his uncle's, at all, at all."

Celestine, conscious of the general regard fixed on her, of the gallant Edward Blandy's bold black eyes, and especially of the flicker of amusement in those of Sallie Jewel, blushed crimson under and around her rouge, and looked at Mrs. Blandy. This glance projected on her a dizzy impression of shining and swinging rings of brass or gold; her head spun with novel and ticklish sensations, mingling vanity and excitement. As she looked at Mrs. Blandy, that lusty matron, enjoying her joke till she shook in every layer of fat, caught the glance, blush, and aspect of confusion, and hastened to chuckle out astounding consolation.

"Take it easy, my dear, now do! When I was such a gal as you and Sallie there, mercy my gracious, how the dudes ran after me! Only they were dandies in those days, and wore big whiskers to cover their foolish looks instead of exposing 'em as these do. Don't you be blushing like a lobster in the pot, now, for I tell you from experience you'll soon get used to it."

"My dear ma'am, you and the immortal Munch lead the dance of beauty yet, believe me!" sighed Jerry Crœsus with a fervid glance.

"Miss Celestine and I come next, now don't we? I'll take the vote of the company!" vociferated Blandy with an ardent grin at his *vis-à-vis*.

"Oh dear!" murmured Celestine, with charming diffidence.

"In this matther, Misther Crasus sor, yez loie. Oi was niver known to plaze no man wid me looks, nor to loike no man but wan, an' he was me grandad an the mither's soide, that raised me an doide at the age of nointy-six, the Howly Mother bliss his sowl, iver senst which Oi've had mass sid for it by Father McManus ivery first Sunday in the month. Therefore, Misther Crasus, sor, Oi'll thank yez not to thrifle wid me riputation."

Percy Gore, whose smile was bonny and winning when it showed, laughed with ready humor and rose.

"Well, Ormond, I'm going round to the theatre now; I'll meet you in the second act. Good-bye, Mignon, don't wait up for me; I may take supper with Gault at the Kids' Club." He passed out of the room as he spoke, and the hall door presently slammed after him.

"I suppose you'll want to be there, old boy?" said the large blonde with raillery.

"Well, Fanny, perhaps so. The Kids are pretty good company." Ormond Pell smiled; he had affecting brown eyes and eyebrows plaintively arched. He was always cast second to Gore at Halleck's, but thought himself his friend's superior. The truth was that Gore's acting, marked by strong nature-touches, informed by his own force of individuality, eclipsed

that of Pell, whose feebler powers were tainted by an eternal vanity. Gore interpreted his *rôles*; with Pell new parts were like new clothes, fitted on him to enhance his personal attributes.

"All right; I'll let you go, if you'll remember all old McGuffey's stories for me. I never can get that horrid old thing to come out strong as he does at the Kids', and I'm always dying to see him at his wickedest, for he looks so wicked at his best."

The actor followed his friend with Kershaw, Jerry Crœsus and Mandeville Branding. As they left the room Mrs. Gore leaned back in her chair in a querulous luxury of discontent.

"Oh, Fanny!" she wailed. "How can you send Ormond to those orgies at the Kids'? That place ought to be called the 'Fiends' Club'; Per-cy—"

"Does he come back with a smell of—brimstone—on him?" asked Sallie Jewel, with a pale flash of her eyes.

"Ha! ha! ha! Mine does sometimes!" ejaculated the large blonde, with a burst.

"To be sure!" chuckled Mrs. Blandy, with unction. "We know 'em, we married women, hey? They're doves at first and serpents afterwards; my goodness gracious blessed soul be saved, after Blandy who should know better than me? Don't believe in their candy and ogles, my little dears; it's done to deceive you!"

Here her son made violent protestations.

"You'll scare Miss Celestine out of her slippers! Don't think we are all dove-like serpents; I ain't, I swear upon my solemn honor. I never did take after my dar."

"Misther Iddy is the son av his ma; shure his father was but a poor shpalpeen."

"Per-cy," said Mrs. Gore, continuing, with an habitual complaining drawl upon her husband's name, "is so given up to every wickedness that it doesn't really matter much whether he is out or in, he's too far gone. But Ormond is so good comparatively; how can you let him go to that awful place, where McGuffey is too? When I think of that terrible club and McGuffey it always seems like a reflection of Old Nicholas and the hot place."

"Ormond knows he can go or stay, so he don't give me any trouble," said Mrs. Pell, "but brings me back tid-bits that keep me laughing for a week. I tell you I enjoy it as much as he does, and he knows it, so we keep good friends about it."

"But how can I keep good friends with Percy? He knows I hate late suppers and all those things that take him away from me, and yet he won't come home as soon as the play is through, no, never. He treats me as if I hadn't any more influence or importance than the cat!" Here the little woman's bruised conceit was visible beneath the mask of bruised affection. "How I envy women whose husbands don't leave them for Kids' Clubs and McGuffeys;—but Percy doesn't care; he's lost to all good feeling," she quavered.

At this instant Munch drew up opposite the speaker; her lean arms akimbo, an implacable glare emitting from her small watchful eyes, her aspect that of an Avenging Nemesis. Fixing the little woman with an astounding glance, Munch solemnly opened her mouth. "Misthruss Gore," she announced, "Oi have this to inforrum yez: 'tis kisses, nat curses, that kape luv aloive."

Silence dropped over them all, but Mrs. Blandy's earrings vibrated subtly, and Edward Blandy stuffed

his knuckles in his mouth. "Go it, Munch, jolly old war-horse!" he was heard to gasp under his breath by Sallie Jewel.

Munch kept her vigilant eyes immovable, like a gaunt female Ancient Mariner.

"To hould his affictions it suldn't be nadeful to chivvy his ivery hour loike a shlave-droiver. There was niver noither man nor bashte wud warship the the rod that's pickled for his back. It's aginst th' intintions av the good Lord that they should. Misther Gore, wid his bonny darke oye, an' the shmoile an his face loike sunshine afther rain, an' his swate tongue saying, 'Good mornin', Munch,' ivery day loike the thrue-feelin' gintleman he is, should have married the Quane av England, an' he'd only have rayched his just desarts. Oi say this to you, Misthruss Gore, for to warn yez. Ye suld lind the mind in yez to common-sinse. A gintleman the loikes of him, wid his beautiful luks an' the manners av a lord, will sure be blarneyed an' faysted an' wilcomed at ivery carner av the worruld. An' when the woife av his boosum frets him, an' bastes him, an' thrates him loike a camel in the disert, will he shtop wid the sairpent's tongue or the duv's?"

As she wound up, brandishing her long right arm, first towards her subject, and then towards the hall door and adjacent street, the feelings of her hearers burst out like a series of exploding champagne corks.

"Ye gods and little fishes! The virgin Munch loves a married man!"

"Misther Iddy, ye'll fry in Purgatory many a day for the tellin' o' that big loie aginst me."

"I've heard more sense to-night than women in

general learn in a lifetime," said Sallie Jewel, with a pale gleam in her narrow half-closed eyes.

"Munch, you beat old McGuffey to smash!" the large blonde burst out, screaming with laughter.

"Av ye please Oi've no likin' for that ould person, an' I wouldn't touch him wid the shnout of a kittle!"

"Munch, dear, haven't you been chewing a whiskey bottle in mistake for tobacco?" chuckled out Mrs. Blandy. "If Crœsus had been here, my blessed goodness gracious, he'd have split his pretty sides with laughing!"

"Misther Crasus, mum, niver thruly suspicted me virtue as you an' Misther Iddy does. An' shure yez can't say there's no sign o' disordherly whuskey bottles in that. 'Tis the same ould plug Oi've had these days pasht, an' there's no difference in it, at all, at all."

She hooked from the hinder part of her jaw the aged plug and exhibited it.

"Great Scott!" roared Edward Blandy. "'Tis the end!" and made a feint of swooning off his chair.

CHAPTER X.

NIGHTFALL.

"Keep silence now, for singing time is over,
And over all old things, and all things dear.
* * * * What help is here?
There is no help, for all these things are so,
And all the world is bitter as a tear."

—SWINBURNE.

MRS. VARIAN had resolved to render her new home as beautiful and attractive to her husband and Gladys as was within her power. She appreciated the opportunities for rich effect and decoration that the large apartment gave; and had brought from the Madison avenue residence, which had been let for six months, all the artistic and exquisite hangings and bric-a-brac collected here. She constantly supervised the disposal of these, by a faithful man-servant long in her employment, and finally completed a rich *tout ensemble* of harmonious coloring and arrangement.

The middle of October was passing: a brief Indian summer softened the air. It was late afternoon: Mrs. Varian and the man-servant, Sanford, stood by the high window of the drawing-room, and looked down the length of three apartments. The dying light was warm in the square beyond, though the trees were growing unmantled of their leaves, and there was a faint yellow haze far off towards the church whose spires rose dark against a gold flecked sunset sky. A

long beam slanted down the rooms, reflecting on their dark polished floors, overlaid with dim-colored Persian rugs, and striking the ivory keys of the Steinway grand which stood open in the last apartment, suggesting an advancing monster with formidable teeth. Beyond, the light caught a Japanese screen of faint blue silk, subtly bright against the lower tints, and a broad curtain of weighty Moorish stuffs hung at the end of the room. A dim light in a clear, wine-colored globe hung diffusing a softened rich tinge where it touched, blending an indefinable mystery in the perspective through arches draped with Eastern hangings of embroidery.

Sanford looked around him, with a mixture of admiration and content. He was a fine fellow, thirty years old, with a certain boyishness about him, and arched eyebrows that seemed surprised at everything.

"And shure, Mrs. Varian, mum, I'd be apt to be happy here, if Oi was you. An' we've fixed it all finely, almost as beautiful-looking as the ould home."

Sanford had begun life as a private in the English ranks: a soldierly bearing, a decent neatness, some fine humorous stories of Indian life, and an empty pocket were relics of this phase of his existence, concluded abruptly through a boyish and drolly mischievous prank and a plucky fidelity to his accomplice. Simple as an infant, yet shrewd enough, dutifully respectful yet slyly comic at odd times, he had entered the household of Mrs. Varian as a groom ten years before, and progressed by dint of honesty and cheerfulness to the position of valet, which he filled to admiration.

"Yes, Sanford, you have been very useful, and helped to make us comfortable; I shall not forget it.

I am sorry we must part with you, but, as you know, we have had to part with many things we valued."

Mrs. Varian stifled a sigh as she spoke.

"Perhaps some day all this will have gone by, and old times may come again. If that is ever so, I shall not forget you and your faithful service."

The good fellow glanced at his mistress with a kind of fright in the look. "An' shure, mum, what 'ud the masther do 'ithout me for to shave him? 'Tis certain he'd cut his troat!"

Mrs. Varian smiled.

"Sanford, you must not try to persuade me. The horses are sold, and I cannot see any employment here for a brisk young fellow like you, who might earn a good salary elsewhere. You know our highest recommendation will be given you, besides every wish for your good fortune."

"An where's the good fortun' will come to a poor feller like me, with a heart for genuine feelin's, when them as he's served for ten long years goes to turn him away loike a strange sthray dog? Shure, mum, it's niver a matther of could cash wid me, but of rid-hot feelin's!"

Mrs. Varian was touched; there was a tear in the poor fellow's eye as he spoke. However, she kept silent.

"Now, see here, mum," he resumed, perceiving the impression he had made. "'Tis hard for a feller to haul hisself out av all his ould habits an' manners of livin'; an' for an orphan to lave all them as has been like his guardians an' parents so long; an' for a b'y as is so accustomed to one gent's chin in shavin' that he knows ivery hair, so to shpeak, av his beard, to turn out an' seek his fortun' in the world. I can't

make out what Oi'd do when I'd leave yez, more than the babe unborn. Shure, mum, 'tis not you will sind me from yez, wid a world to contend wid of dollars, not feelin's?"

Mrs. Varian smiled again.

"Ah, Sanford, I ought not to listen to you You know it's not any use—"

"An' phoy not, savin' your prisence, mum? 'Tis a free counthry here an' a man can name his own price for shavin' a gintleman as he foinds it a preevelige tc handle, shure thin."

"Sanford, do not talk about it any more—"

"Shure Oi will, mum, toime an' again, if I'd be apt to saften your heart?"

"Well, tell me what it is you wish, then."

"Ah, mum, that's loike your own kind self. The thrut' about this matther is," said Sanford, with an air of respectful confidence tempered with triumph on gaining his point, "whin Oi was in Her Majersty's service I met wid thrue hardship an' shook his hand. An' since then I've sworn to kape on the other soide av life's sthreet from him. If yez tells me to quit this service, shure ye'll make me perjured, mum, savin' your prisence, for Oi shall fall intil his arrums immediate. Shure ye won't sind me away?"

Mrs. Varian remained silent. There was a twinkle of fun in his honest brown eye that brought up many a memory of the good fellow's half comic and half pathetic attachment. He went on earnestly.

"An' there's plinty of odd jobs around the place; shure thin, Oi'll find enough to do. In the army I larnt to turn my han' to all thrades, loike a monkey, saving your prisence, mum; an' what's the use of my learning, at all, if I can't help along to kape house at

a pinch. Oi'd be just the b'y to run irrands, an' do the fish an' vegetable marketing, for in Corke, where Oi lived a little shpalpeen, I served in a butcher's an' grocery both."

Looking anxiously at his mistress' pale profile, he added with an indescribable expression and tone of voice:

"An', mum, dear lady—saving your prisence—Oi've made all arrangements for lodgin' out, in the insthant neighborhood. Shure, yez won't be angry to see the face of a craythur whose feelin's compils him to come, appearin' ivery morning at siven?"

His supplicating brown eyes were on her, like a faithful dog's being turned away. He came a step nearer timidly.

"For the sake av auld lang syne, shure thin—?"

Mrs. Varian turned towards him then.

"Yes, Sanford, you shall stay."

That night they were to begin life in the new home.

The sun sank as the last Saratoga was piled on a cab waiting outside the Varian residence on Madison avenue. The house had assumed an indefinable forsaken air, which suggested the look of a cast-off glove, empty of the accustomed hand. Gladys, in some dark neutral-tinted stuffs, passed down the steps, her dropped eyelids showing slight weary purple veins, and entered the cab. A maid-servant ran out hastily, holding a twisting length of yellow fur, with a swelled and dark-ringed tail lashing pendant, and returned from the *coupé* door empty handed. The whip cracked mildly, and the wheels rolled over the heavy cobblestones of the avenue at a moderate pace. The maid-servant shut the house doors with a slam, and the front of Tom Varian's hospitable mansion looked

down upon the empty street with the strange blank pathos of a dead face.

The *coupé* rattled leisurely away. There were no lights yet on the quiet avenue. Gladys had mechanically soothed and calmed the furious little yellow beast, and he lay upon her knees, his feathery tail caressingly thrown across her hand. She sat quite quiet, her colorless face bent; feeling the vibration of his purring throat that he had stretched upon her palm; thinking or enduring the tide of broken thought that flooded through her brain. She remembered a thousand inconsequent things; the night of the Newport ball; the look in Gerard's eyes as he asked her for the waltz; the moment of entering the long conservatory when blending flower-odors filled the dim air and seemed to caress her like the sound of his voice; the cold, intolerable pain about her heart when the lights fell on his face by the carriage, and they said good-bye. She went over the time which had passed since then; an interminable succession of hours, of days, of phases of suffering. She looked towards the future; there seemed to be an unmeasured cold blank without hope. The past held all her hope.

The drive had terminated: she heard the cabman leave his box, and the response of a deep gong-bell. Sandy had wakened at the cab's stopping and rose on her lap, arching his supple back and setting his full ringed tail aloft, and gaped. At this moment the door was opened by a strong hand and Sanford's face appeared.

"Good evening, Miss, an' welcome! We've made all as bright as pipe-clay in hopes av ye." The good fellow gave a military salute, unforgotten from his days in Her Majesty's service, and helped her to alight.

He escorted her up a broad stoop and through doors with upper panels of stained glass, into a sombre, roomy hall. A wide staircase of black wood led up from this; there was a janitor's office to the left where shelves, each containing the letters of the family to which it belonged, were faced with low slits of glass like opaque dim eyes in the dark wood. A heavy carved settle stood along the right wall; and opposite this a grim portrait of George Washington, with a gleam of light across the face from a hanging lamp just lighted, watched Gladys into the home of her new life. Two polished pillars of dark marble stood at the entrance, which was open; beyond from the threshold stretched a narrow hall, paved with mosaics in colored marbles, and terminating in a draped opening on the suite of drawing-rooms. To the right was a dining-room whose single broad window fronted on the square. Rich-colored Moorish curtains were drawn, and jets of gas with globes of tinted glass threw a mellowed light upon the table set for dinner, whose plate and colored china sparkled. Gladys, passing down the mosaic hall, recognized the familiar pattern of the service.

Sandy, gathered close in his mistress' arms, his large tail flicking at the end, visible below, his small striped head above them, watched everything with wide amber eyes, wary, full of golden lights.

Mrs. Varian appeared, hurrying from the drawing-room, and laid her hands on her daughter's shoulders with a tender kiss of welcome. The incensed little yellow beast swore slightly, laying back his thick white whiskers as her dress brushed against his face, and flicked the entire length of his swelling tail. Sanford relinquished his charge, saluted, and returned to

join the janitor in conveying the load of trunks from the cab.

"There is an old friend to welcome you, my Gladys," Mrs. Varian pointed to the Steinway standing open under the clear red light that reflected upon its case.

Gladys felt dully that she ought to respond with warmth and tenderness. She made a great effort, smiling with her lips, whose curves were saddened in their lines.

"Dear little lady," she murmured, but in her eyes was the perpetual shadow.

Night was falling without.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BROOCH OF THE QUARTER-MOON.

A CERTAIN *camaradèrie* had been established between Celestine and Sallie Jewel, of the Bijou. This was inevitable. Celestine, determined to "get on in life," saw her chance, and sustaining her fine assumption of ingenuousness, succeeded in obtaining Sallie's confidence without revealing herself. There was a certain perverted element of diplomacy in her, with some power of dissimulation; she had a knack of saying little, but impressing on the mind the idea of a pliable retiring disposition, with instincts of affection. Sallie Jewel, experienced and distrustful, regarded every personality in contact with her own, from a profoundly skeptical point of view; nevertheless this impression conveyed itself to her mind insensibly.

One afternoon Sallie returned from the matinée and climbed upstairs to Celestine's room. She found her lighting the gas; a rouge-pot, besmeared with its contents, on the disordered bureau-top; the black box open, its brass nails twinkling dully; the bed heaped with miscellaneous property. Celestine had thrown her dress off, though she had forgotten to remove her bonnet, and on the strings of this, at the cheek, was fastened Gladys' brooch of the quarter-moon.

"You don't seem very bright to-night," said Sallie Jewel, with a careless glance at her, standing before the looking-glass. "Low barometer has a great deal to do with it. Nothing in life affects me except the state of the barometer, my dear."

She smiled slowly, with a kind of cynicism that gave to her smooth face the aspect of a mask. The dull glass reflected sullenly the flicker of her eyes.

"Oh, Sallie! What can I do? I have been to Manager Earle, and he says he can't take me, and won't have even an eight-dollar place empty this season unless some of his girls die; and I tried to see Otis and waited for him two hours at the box-office—they told me he might come—but he never did. I'm tired out; did you ever feel utterly disheartened, and wretched and wish you were dead?"

"Once," said Sallie Jewel, with a peculiar sudden glance.

"What is the good of living like this? Look round here! I was never meant to go without comfort or—or anything! I ought to make my way in the world."

"You follow the wrong master, my friend: 'the devil dowers his daughters.'" There was an indescribable expression of callous and cynical derision on her delicate face; her lips curled slowly in a smile.

"I don't know what I may be driven to by this sort of thing if it lasts!" rejoined Celestine. "It's frightful for a girl like me! I want a chance—some showing—and it kills me not to be able to have it. How can one hope to get on in the world if one can't make a beginning?"

"That is very true," answered the other, with negligence. "I should like to have you with us, up at the Bijou."

"Ah, if I could only manage to get in there; it would—Oh, Sallie! do you think I could? It all looked so easy at first, but now—! I think I was born unlucky!"

"That is the usual idea. You will find out that

nothing in this world is easy, before you have lived much longer in it; that brilliant shams are acceptable; that every department of art is given over to petty and imitative laborers, who endeavor to strike the taste of the public rather than the truth in nature and life; you will find out that an opera-bouffe queen's fame rests rather on her beauty, her immorality and her costumes than on her perfection in art; and that the popularity of women in society is gauged by the thousands they spend to obtain it; you will find—" she ceased abruptly. "What am I saying this kind of thing to you for? One should suit his talk to his hearer; most likely you have not comprehended a word. To return, you say you would like to be at the Bijou?" She took in with a certain irony the expression of eagerness on the other's face, and continued, without heeding her answer:

"I was speaking to our manager, and I believe, in the new burlesque, he has room—for a girl like you."

"Sallie—oh Sallie! I think you're the only true friend I've ever had!"

"I do not care for demonstrations, usually, you forget," said Sallie Jewel.

Celestine was not to be turned from her point. "Don't be mad with me," she said, appealingly, taking her companion's passive hand. "I didn't mean to vex you, Sallie, you know. I'm fond of you and always want to please you, dear—" she spoke with humility.

"Well," said the other, "if you were fond of me for what you could get you would be like the rest of the world: if you are not I can claim to having found a single disinterested woman."

"Ah, don't go on like that, it sounds as if you had had such a life of disappointment and dissolution. I

hate to hear you say those things; it makes me feel as if nothing were any use, you know; and I was terribly cheated once, myself. O, what a sad life I have had!"

"Well, child, I am sorry for you, if that will do you any good. How was it?"

Celestine put her hand to her brows, as one might under a painful memory.

"I don't know how to tell it all to you," she said; they had cleared off a place on the edge of the bed, and sat there in the midst of the dingy confusion of the room, and opposite the open black box, of which a hinge had given out.

"My mother used to live in London before she was married, and was a kind of confidential maid to a young lady there who afterwards married an American gentleman, and left England with him to settle in this city. She wanted my mother to come too, but she was unwilling to leave London and married soon afterwards. I don't remember anything about our life but that it was full of wretched poverty; and I used to get colds from the fog and damp and the winds in winter that almost killed me. We lived in a little street off Tottenham Court Road, one of the dirtiest in the world, I think, and I had to get up early in the morning and go out to buy our bit of something for dinner. My father had died before I could remember, and mother and I had to live the best we could—sometimes we were almost begging. We used to work on spangles; they only gave us less than a shilling a dozen for them, and the work was so fine that it hurt our eyes and mother nearly went blind. I had to go through Regent street and Covent Garden to take the stars to the theatrical costumers who used them; and the

great shops were full of every kind of costly splendid things, and the markets full of beautiful fruits, purple grapes and big guinea pears. Oh, how I longed for money! for the kind of life that was going on all around, to get away from our wretched little room, where we cooked and slept, with a bare floor and a flock bed, and that the landlord used to want the rent of, and curse us when we couldn't pay and kept him waiting a week. I would have sold my soul for ease and luxury and riches—"

"Yes. After death what matters?"

Celestine paused a moment: she saw that her companion's eyes were wide opened and looking far away; and then resumed:

"I thought I should have gone mad when I went by all those things, and felt the bitter cold through my old black dress and the wet through the holes in my boots. At last it all came to an end. Mother died, and there was hardly enough to bury her. I was all alone. On the last day of her life she told me to bring her pen and paper and wrote a long letter to the lady who had been her mistress when she was a girl. This lady had sometimes sent her money and kind letters; and she asked her to help me now that she was dying and I had no one in the world. There was a large order of stars on our hands just when she died, and by working day and night at them, sometimes with only a tallow candle to see by, I managed to get enough money to satisfy the landlord, and stayed almost three weeks in the old room after she was gone. I was looking for an answer to her letter every hour. On the nineteenth day it came. I will never forget the look of that cover, square, in heavy grey paper, with a small crest on the flap. It sent me money and told me my passage

was paid by a line of steamers from London, and added that the lady would give me a home in her house always, in remembrance of my poor mother's sad life, and of the time when she was happy, a young girl like myself. I had never had so much money before. It seemed as if heaven had opened to me. I bought some clothes and linen and a trunk, and saved what was left of the sum. Then I left the wretched room where I had spent sixteen years of my life, and started for New York.

"When we reached Jersey City, where the dock was, I was met by a footman in livery who took charge of me and brought me to the lady's house. She and her husband and daughter lived in a great house, such as I had never hoped to enter when I used to live in London, and she was very kind to me. I became her daughter's maid, and lived with them two years. I had considerable wages, and went with them from New York to Newport when they moved from their town house for the summer. This summer the young lady went into society a great deal; she came out last winter. Everyone was wild about her. She had the most beautiful throat and arms I ever saw, and a face like a statue's. When she smiled a sort of soft radiance seemed to come from her eyes over all her whole face, like a thing you see by steady firelight. She used to like me well enough, but this summer she suddenly grew quieter, as if something absorbed her, and I soon found what it was. Amongst all the gentlemen who came about her and admired her, there was one she loved. He was cold, and had a careless way that became him as nothing else could do, and dark eyes that would sometimes glitter suddenly, and the light die out before you looked again. She never said a word about him; I don't believe even her mother knew; but

she loved him as I hope I'll never care for any man that lives;—and he loved me. He had seen me once or twice. I passed through the hall as he came in one day, and I took a message to him from her mother once, when she was out. That was all. Soon he ceased visiting them often, and he managed to speak to me the last time I ever saw him, a day in August. He offered everything wealth could give if I would go with him to Paris. He said he had even taken our passages; he urged me, he bribed me, he tried his best. I told him I scorned his offer, and he left Newport three days afterwards."

Celestine paused as if to take breath, and unfastened her bonnet ribbons. Her hands touched the brooch of the quarter-moon. A kind of light flashed into her face.

"Well?" said Sallie Jewel.

"He had sent me a letter before he went, still urging me to go with him. One day I found I had lost it from the drawer in which it lay, and soon after, my young lady charged me with having stolen a ring of hers, pretended she had too much consideration for her mother to expose me to her, and dismissed me at an hour's notice. I never saw anything look like her face as she stood and said this to me, except the white heat of a fire with breaths of air slowly changing across it. I think the girl that slept with me had found the letter and given it to her. What could I do? He was gone, even if I had wished to change my mind. I was thrown upon my own resources, with nothing but my little savings. Oh Sallie, Sallie! you know all the rest!"

"And that is the history of your life?" Sallie Jewel said quietly, looking into her face. "Did you love this man? You have not told me that."

"I—did."

"Would you now do as he asked you then—now that you have known hope deferred, and poverty, and some of the realities of life? I think you would. Tell me.'

"Perhaps."

"Let me say this to you: it would be worth while. Life has three parts—sin, suffering and pleasure. You know which part you have had all your years, and which you have craved."

"Yes, Sallie, I know."

"The stars have looked down for cycles from what we fools call heaven. Men have lived that spent their years in trying to 'do good.' And the world, half rotted through with corruption, goes on, and the stars look down like points of ice. There is no heaven beyond there: the world is all. Religions have changed like fashions, my friend; but one has been always: the worship of gold. Pleasure and Gold are immortal: adore them! serve them! They at least pay you well!"

There was supreme and ferocious irony in her voice and glittering eyes. The coarser evil in the other nature responded instinctively. Silence fell; for a time there was only the quick sound of rapid breathings.

"Now I am going to tell you what my life has been; how I came to doubt most things and fear nothing this side of the grave. I was cast on the world at my birth, like a blind kitten; I was a natural child, and my mother died without even having seen me. Of my father I know nothing but that he was believed to be rich and profligate, and came of a great foreign family. My mother had been a ballet girl, very beautiful, and lived in a tenement on the East Side, alone with my grandmother. The latter's people had been wealthy and cultivated at one time, but misfortune had brought

them to bare poverty, and my grandmother had to work with her hands, although she always preserved the traces of her former refinement of life and surroundings, and gave me more cultivation than it is usual to find amongst such people as my life has been spent in contact with. There were many who would have tempted my mother before my father did, but she was pure, and held to a virtuous life and to the poor old woman who loved her with devotion, and was proud of her unsullied beauty. In her own way she also had pride; she never surrendered to the coarse bribes of wealth; it was only when, after two years on the stage, she met him, and loved him, that she faltered. She loved him; it is all told in that. Perhaps she thought her happiness would last. Ah, bah! women are always blind.

"Time passed, he tired of her, and she came back to her mother broken-hearted. He had lavished money on her, and she had thought, not of that, but of him. When she found that his love—bah! his passion—had worn through, though she had come to love him more absorbingly as the time passed, she took some jewels that he had given her, souvenirs of the first days passed together—simpler and less worth than others given later—and leaving the rich apartment he had furnished for her and all that was in it, fled from it to the wretched home where the years of her girlhood were spent. I think the agony of his indifference to her and her shame under it killed her. She lingered, like one whose soul is dead in the living body, until her child was born, and died before she could look upon my face. I sometimes feel I might have saved myself from the life I have led, from sheer unbelief and despair and scorn of God, if her poor dying eyes, with

the pure light of a mother's love, had ever rested on me. Before she died she said, 'Take care of my child —I love it for his sake.' My grandmother told me this with the rest of the story of that broken life, when she herself was dying, fifteen years after. Until then I had been a sewing-girl, and helped her to support us both, for I felt a kind of affection for her such as I have known for no woman since: there was in it an element of trust. But when she was gone the world seemed to me absolutely bare, without pity or love. The story of my young mother's death and suffering had burnt into my soul, leaving there an impression of cruelty and hopelessness like the taste of ashes. I could no longer endure the sameness and level poverty of my former life, only supported for the sake of my grandmother, who had centered on me with the love, the few hopes of her starved old age. I became a *figurante* in one of the Bowery theatres. This was at least less terrible to me than remaining in that room where she, the only creature I had ever come near loving, had died; for I slept with several other girls employed at the same theatre, in an attic which we rented jointly and occupied together. At the same time it was perhaps worse for me than any brooding over loss or sorrow could have been, for through their companionship I had a view of the vicious side of life, the possibilities of mental and moral degradation, of the coarse brutalities that half fill up existence, that rendered me at once hardened and sickened, and showed me prayer an irony to what God would suffer this to be

"The foundations of my faith were shaken. The simple prayers my grandmother had taught me as a child, and besought me always to repeat before I slept

in memory of her, became to me the hollowest mocking, the proof of her fond and cheated faith. The only tears of my life came to my eyes when I visited her grave, and tried to say them there beside it. . . . Let that pass. I went on to the turning-point of my life without God, mother or friend. I had advanced from the ranks of the chorus to small parts which I undertook with success. I became a favorite with the habitués of the house, and my room-mates and former fellows grew jealous, and showed their feeling with that inconceivable pettiness of spite of which women alone have the secret. About this time a recruiter from one of the uptown theaters observed me, and made me an offer from his house. I accepted, and moved a step higher in the life which to you is so enviable. To me it was a relief, as it offered me freedom from the irritation of enduring contact with my former companions, whose envy began to show itself openly. I was then hardly seventeen years old. I had never conceived the slightest affection for any creature besides my poor old grandmother; and had no idea of love or passion; I was singnlarly cold. From this time I began to make my theatrical reputation, I might have had a hundred lovers, but I remembered my mother's story, my grandmother's pitiful and imploring warnings, and these thoughts, coupled with my own insensibility, prompted me to refuse all proposals. I prospered. Six months passed. And then Fate overtook me. My life has been as bitter as my mother's, only in hers death put an end to the pain. I met a man who aroused in me passion and love like the fires of a volcano. He loved me. But he had what fools call Honor; that idea, that accursed phantom, which has wrecked so many lives before ours.

His wife stood between us; a girl he had married, thinking he loved her, before I taught him what it was to love! He spoke of her trust—her youth—her purity—and he fought against me and himself. I suffered more than hell! We loved, but he was stronger than love. I do not know whether I did not feel for him a hatred more burning and absorbing than my passion, when at last, to get beyond my reach and temptations, he left the country. I have never seen him since. After that I believe I had brain-fever for some months; it would have been better if I had never been recalled to life. I recovered, and the consuming agony of my robbed hope, of my empty heart, devoured me. I threw myself into extravagant dissipation, and drugged myself to get sleep when the memory was too keen in me. He had never been my lover, and since I had never been that to him, I cared nothing what my life became. God and man had failed me. That was two years ago. Time dulls the edge of pain as rust blunts a knife. I no longer suffer—like that; but in my heart is a barrenness like the barrenness of a volcano's mouth where the fires have burned out every germ of life.

"I have finished."

For awhile there was silence in the room; a kind of thick suffocating quiet. The gas flared and sung from the burner for a second, and burned steady again, dull by contrast. Then Sallie Jewel's voice, a tone strained and hard, broke the tension.

"You had better show me your foot and ankle; otherwise I shall not be able to give the manager an idea of your merits for the part."

There was the usual cool ironical air about her, but her face was white to the lips.

CHAPTER XII.

TEMPUS FUGIT.

"Unloved is the lover, his mistress retreats;
She loves another; her love he cheats.
Ever between man and his star, the soul and its place
Rises the inexorable bar . . . ."

"MY good fellow," said Archie Ambleon, with authority, to Peter his brother. "It will be very useful to me for you to know them. That darned frank open way of yours would take in anyone. You will be in and out seven days in the week in no time, and I shan't need to bother further about them with you as my deputy. And listen, you old Don Juan; Miss Gladys is a charming pretty girl. Now look alive, for I shall be ready in five minutes, sharp."

Peter shambled out of Archie's little suite in the Hansen and down to his humbler lodging in the basement. Here he contrived to put on a very presentable appearance; though, from his gait to the large bland bumps of his forehead, and to his broad flat ears and feet, his aspect expressed "Dead Failure."

The stroke of the gong broke on the music of Chopin's Opus XI., which Gladys was interpreting on the eloquent keys of her Steinway. At the sound, she rose, and passed into the drawing-room wearily. Soon after, the brothers Ambleon were announced.

"I don't think I ever had the pleasure of presenting my brother to you before this, Mrs. Varian,' said

Archie, easily, and performed the introduction. The broker, Edward Golden, was there; he was slightly known to the younger Ambleon, between whom and himself existed a mutual antipathy practically unexplained. Peter, with his bland semi-cough, sat down beside Gladys and his hostess; he fancied himself on being a lady's man, and commenced to entertain them suavely. He was one of the legion of egotists whose personalities are too empty to stand with credit being brought into the light, but who never recognize it.

Notwithstanding the fine tact of Mrs. Varian, and Gladys' desire to be gracious to her guests which masked the weariness of them she felt, the first moments of this reunion of uncongenial spirits were subtly embarrassing.

Peter felt it with his exquisitely developed mental epidermis of conceit, and began relating to the ladies the adventures of a moose hunt in the old Canadian days, before the Empire City Bank had swallowed him. Archie felt it, exchanging a financial comparison with Varian, and meeting with his shifting glance the broad leonine regard of Golden. Gladys felt it, detecting in a breath the dissonance amongst the personalities about her. Above all Golden felt it, over whom, with the sound of her music, had been stealing an influence, exquisite, unnamed, profound, like that of warmth on one who is weary with the din of thoroughfares and numb with winter cold. His existence had passed in the keen strife and competition of the exchanges, and Gladys, with her noble brow and saddened mouth, stirred in him the hope of that home-life, whose idea appeals to us all sometimes, where the face of a true woman is a voiceless sympathy, and we find repose beside a soul which appeals to us in its reliance and beguiles us with its trust.

Peter Ambleon distinguished himself. He monopolized his hostesses for twenty minutes by the tall Dutch clock which stood and seemed to watch them. He unwound the episodes, the incidents, the surprises and the details of his early moose hunt with wonderful fidelity of remembrance and fine perfection of minutiæ; and, in addition, compared to it a recital (in the *Evening Post* of the week before) of a more modern moose chase related at full length. It was a weakness of his to quote copiously from old papers his hearers must have read.

"I think it would be easy to make a very interesting article from your own experiences, Mr. Ambleon," said Mrs. Varian, with generous courtesy. She regarded bore-hood as a species of senility which visits some men before age lends excuse to failings, but endured it as the omnipotent prevailing Juggernaut of society.

Peter was flattered, and smiled his suave frank smile.

"I should—er—have enjoyed putting down my experiences once, Mrs. Varian, but my energy is not so great as it was when I went on that moose hunt. Seventeen years make a difference in a man. The only compensation is that now I can say that I know human nature, while at that time I was a raw subaltern."

"To know human nature is a great attainment," said Mrs. Varian, finally stung into delicate satire of reply. "If you have mastered it you can reach something higher than a well-told hunting story, and stand beside De Balzac and Tolstoi."

The sarcasm passed over his head, and the allusion left his armed invulnerable egotism delicately soothed.

At this moment Varian, who was not without tact,

requested Gladys to give them some music; Golden rose and accompanied her where the opened book stood on the desk.

"Will you not play this again?" he asked. "It is music that I have never heard before. It makes me think of some hours in a man's life when he feels half sickened with its stress and fret, and wishes for rest. I think a woman can hardly understand. It is a kind of vague longing which one can't express, though that music seemed to do so."

Golden instinctively trusted her to comprehend such thoughts as this: they seemed to rise in him under her influence, and he spoke to her of them as they came, slowly, with his broad glowing regard on her, which interpreted the feelings that touched him better than his speech.

"I think music was made to give expression to the innermost soul. As you say, there are feelings too indefinable and profound for speech, and it is music which interprets them."

She spoke simply, and always with the shadow of sadness on her face.

"Yes," said Golden. She began to play.

The evening passed; Gladys found relief from the covert flatteries of Peter Ambleon and the vapid talk of Archie, in the splendid tones of the Steinway, and Edward Golden's companionship. He had not that vanity which is the king-bolt of most men's machinery, which urges them to seek success whether with women or with art, and he rather watched her beauty, and received the impression of her magnetic charm, than endeavored to exhibit himself in striking lights to gain her interest. We most of us pose eternally, if we have that yeast of vanity that impels the dough of our ambition

to rise; but Golden was free from the apish attribute. He began unconsciously to love her, and in Gladys he forgot himself.

It was November; the city was filling. Society matrons returned to plan the moves of the winter campaign. *Débutantes* examined with ecstacy the gowns which were to assist, in fact to consummate, their triumphs. Club men filled the windows of the Union and Calumet, and found return to the old ways of town-life, their daily review of pretty women passing on the avenue, their high-flavored anecdotes, their play in the card-rooms, more diverting than the *far niente* of Lenox. Jesse B. Hartshorn had returned to his mansion, and infused an indispensable element, his presence, into the life of the clubs. Broadway was streaming with fools, knaves, fashionables, blacklegs, toilettes, dudes, fine women, old beaux, eccentricities, absurdities and nonentities. The streets were jostling full of new "black and tan" hansoms and coupés. From the Murray Hill, looking down Fifth avenue, a delicious vista of shadowy tints stretched far off into a faint distance of interblending suggestion. Every view was full of half tones; the vigorous green of the summer trees had faded to soft yellow brown, mingling with the sunshine in exquisite nuances and hazes.

Gladys went out seldom; an inertia had stolen on her which destroyed the possibility of physical effort. The sight of the city which had been her home in the past which she had lost, gave her an indescribable pain; the stones of the streets, the façades of the houses seemed an everlasting reminder.

On the uptown streets where they cross Fifth avenue there is sometimes to be seen, at once pathetic and

singular, an old woman crouched at the corner-turn with an ancient small box-organ beside her. On this is a pewter cup for pence, to fill which she turns and turns the organ crank. She wears rags that age has tinted harmoniously, and which have acquired a quaint fitness and accord by long habitude each with the other. Her shrivelled face, as she turns the handle, expresses no eagerness or anxiety. She sits, on the stones of the west side, a solitary and peculiar figure, watching the crowds pass without curiosity. And the voice of the organ, the sound which should be evoked by her patient and constant turning of the handle; who has heard it these many years? Not even a faint strain whispers up from it. The old worn, dateless relic and the poor old grandmother sit there together on the edge of the world, silent, together finishing their lives, while vigorous young lives pass them unthinking, forgetting that Age is always beckoning, while Youth waves one away.

Gladys saw this solitary group in the shadow of a rich man's marble mansion, and rested her eyes upon it as she passed.

"Perhaps she was happy once," she thought. "As I was happy." She stooped and laid a silver piece in the little cup, and passed on remembering the days whose suns had set, but not heeding the satire of Fate, the cruelty of Destiny, which could liken her young life to the spent life there, through its blasted hopes.

Time passed; the tall Dutch clock, on whose dial of silver and gilded steel the firelight played at dusk, told out the hours in a lingering sweet chime. To Gladys the common events which came and passed, the incidents of the time, assumed a clear and keen dis-

tinctness; they were stamped upon her by the desolate touch of a solitary and unresting grief.

There hung in the drawing-room a picture of a noble of Maximilian's day at breakfast, lounging in his low carved seat. His wife, a beautiful stately girl in a Marguerite gown of white with a girdle and pouch of gold, stood feeding a fine deer hound. The noble watched her half amused. The coloring of the picture was rich and perfect; the glow of wine; the sheen of fabrics; the cool mosaic marble floor; the dark panels; the shape of a high Dutch time-piece in the background; the hound's deep eyes; the old-time scene was represented with infinite artistry. Gladys saw in his face and the lines of his figure a trace of resemblance to Gerard, and the scene in their life *together* touched her like fire. Her life was ice.

It was a day in the waning of the month; the winter's first unfallen snows darkened a sullen sky, against which rose the two solemn spires with their gold-fingered clocks, looking down upon the faded trees, and the sere grasses of the square. A great Morris chair stood by the windows of the drawing-room facing on the empty parks and on the church. The chill light of the winter day fell across Gladys where she lay against its cushions of stamped velvet, a white bearskin spread at her feet; and she closed the tome of old poems to look out where the first light snowflakes drifted down.

The gong gave a sharp vibrant stroke. Gladys dropped her tired eyelids; Mrs. Varian was absent and she found herself alone.

"I must receive," she thought.

"Mith Varian home?"

"Yes, sir," replied Sanford, admitting him and

helping him off with his overcoat, on which a little snow had fallen. "Your card, if ye please, sir?" Receiving it, the good fellow, grown adroit in the usages of footman-hood, placed it on a little salver, and took it to Gladys thus with a salute. She bent her head.

"I will receive him," she said in a low voice. A minute later, the tall figure of Wallace Toller entered.

Gladys rose and greeted him with a gentleness which half dispersed his nervous diffidence. She had heard from her mother the story of the interview between them, and later of the accident which was its sequel. She felt for him a strong compassion.

"I am glad to see you again," she said. "Have you fully recovered from your fall? I heard they thought once you would die."

Her sweet voice was very gentle as she spoke, and struck on him with the same swift violent sensation, mixing hope and sheer despair, which had seized him as he took her hand. A carved Medici chair stood near her seat; he dropped into it inertly.

"Mith Varian," he said, slowly, and with effort, "I've got well again—yeth,—and only th'other day I heard—that—that—." He stopped, "I heard," he went on presently, "that you were living here. It shocked me, and I had a sort of relapthe, but I wath determined to get m'self better, so I could come and thee you. I'm thtill weak and I feel shaky when I walk, y'know; but I've managed to get here, and I feel ath if all my thuffering had been worth while. Thometimes, y'thee, I felt ath if I mutht die of sheer pain and feebleneth, and I had to fight for life."

"I feel for you so deeply," she said, in a low voice as he paused. She saw that it was impossible to detain the conversation on impersonal grounds, as she had wished to do.

"Yeth, you are the thort of woman t'feel for ev'ything that lives, even a dog," he answered, with an accent of sudden melancholy in his voice. "Women like that make a f'ler feel tho—tho unworthy; an' yet—" He fixed his large eyes on her, haggard with fever and the pain of body and mind. They had an expression, earnest, imploring, eloquent and pure. "Mith Varian, I b'lieve you'd help any mithrable creature that got run over in the street. Can't you help me? I've loved you tho humbly, tho abth'lutely —I've worshipped you! God knows you have become my life an' thoul; I haven't a thought that ithn't centered on you; I haven't a moment that ithn't spent remembering you. You've taken ev'ything that ever made m' life worth living—and I can't find any peathe or hope without you; nothing—nothing. To thee you again was all that gave me thtrength to fight the fever. I wanted to get back to life for one hour even, to athk you to be my wife. I love you tho—you never can think that *I* could love you ath I do."

He regarded her with his pathetic eyes, unnaturally bright, and full of an expression terrible in its intensity. She met his look with one of infinite sorrow and compassion. She hardly knew how to reply.

"If I had known—if I had only known that I was doing you this wrong," she murmured. "And I cannot repair it. . . . if I could I would."

"Mith Varian," he said hoarsely. "Be my wife! I know I'm only a ththupid f'ler that you couldn't ever love, but—but—O God, let me love you—let me love you! There theems to be nothing left for me if you thend me away!"

Gladys trembled, and tears hung on her lashes; she was profoundly moved.

"If I could help you, I would; believe me that I would; but I cannot be your wife. I cannot. I—"

"Will you be angry with me if I athk you whether you have promithed thomeone elthe—?"

"No," she answered quietly, and the sudden memory of Gerard went past her.

"Mith Varian, I would wait for you—I'd never mind how long it .wath, nothing would matter if—if I could hope you'd be my wife at latht—"

"No," she said, gently and earnestly, great tears softly shining in her eyes. "I will not deceive you; I have already caused you pain enough. It would not be right for me to let you think that some day you might win me—for I know that it could never—never be as you wish."

A few hot tears fell on her hands lying locked together in her lap. She felt his suffering with intensity: she knew it through her own.

He looked at her with a long, dull, hopeless gaze, and rose. She also left her chair and stood, her head bent, waiting for his farewell. He took her little chill hand in his, and kissed it where her tears had fallen.

"If you couldn't love me," he said, "God bless you for your angel's pity. God bless you, dear, God bless you!"

Before she knew it he was gone, and the hall door heavily shut behind him. He bent his head and the lonely wind came keen and mournful past him.

She flung herself into the Morris chair, and sobbed there as the snow was falling. "O, heaven, why could I not make *him* love me, instead of this man whom I can not reward? Why—why—why? Life is so cruel!"

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE NEW BURLESQUE.

THE new burlesque was rehearsing at the Bijou; Sallie Jewel had a prominent part. On the bills, in the list of *figurantes*, was a new name—Celestine Lovelight.

"I am going to have you share my dressing-room, and show you how to rouge," said Sallie Jewel to Celestine. "If you don't make up right you'll look a fool, or worse—that is, in most men's eyes—a plain girl. They can stand a woman being a supreme fool, like some of their society belles, if she has beauty; but an ugly woman—well, they think they have not had the worth of their money." Sallie Jewel's eyes shone with a hard light. "I hope you will like the life, when you know it. Any way it can't last more than ten years. After that you are about played out." She smiled her slight satirical smile.

Celestine heard and heeded; she considered the ironies of her friend inimitable and desired to mould herself upon the successful model before her. She was dazzled with the idea of making her *début* at the Bijou, and mixed with her satisfaction a piquant spice of self-complacency. "Sallie," she thought, with secret elation, "began in the Bowery. I ought to get on in the world: *I've* been clever enough to commence at the top. I knew from the first that I only wanted the chance. I'll be ahead of her yet!"

These were her reflections on the evening of her *début*.

"Well, my dear, I'm pleased to see you look so sparkling and blushing and cheerful as you do," remarked Mrs. Blandy at dinner. "In my time it was work enough to get a job in the profession, and when we got it first we did nothing but tremble till we'd made right sure that we were giving satisfaction. We was a precious fold of little lambs, but you girls now come as pert as monkeys. Things always go on improving, to be sure; as Blandy used to say when he got extra out of temper with his life, and that was often. Say, Jerry, I wish my Blandy had known you: no one can feel mean when you're around, and you might have saved him from himself—that is, from whiskey, that he always said was his better half instead of me!"

Crœsus grinned with genuine delight.

"I'm afraid, ma'am, if you failed, no one could beguile him!"

"That's so!" affirmed Kershaw, with irony.

"Percy," said Mrs. Gore at this point, "did you get those tickets for me for the burlesque? I want to go with Fannie; its always so pleasant at the opening night."

"I forgot them," answered her husband, "but I think Jardine will let you pass; he knows Pell and myself——"

"It isn't half as comfortable as just presenting the pass and going in," interrupted Mrs. Gore, with a querulous drawl. "You might have done it, Percy—but I forgot, wives shouldn't expect to have any little attentions paid them——"

"Nonsense, Margaret, we'll go anyway!" exclaimed the large blonde with a burst. "I love to deadhead, it's just the best fun; and I want to see Celestine's first night. It's a pity you're playing at Halleck's, old

boy," she continued pleasantly to Ormond Pell; "or I'd make you take us around there!"

"About that time I shall be coming on as hero to Percy's double-dyed villain," said her husband; "can't break that engagement, you know!"

"Miss Celestine, may I have the honor of seeing you and Miss Sallie to the theatre?" asked Mandeville Branding with a smile. He was a tall young fellow, with dark eyes, and a singularly intelligent face; he wrote *critiques* on the theatres for certain papers in the Empire City, and *feuilletons* for some of the dramatic sheets; and while supporting himself with this sort of hack work, labored on a darling project, the construction of a successful drama. He had a fine plot, and his ambition being to give his best work to the play, spent upon it every hour of leisure, with the care of a lapidary for a splendid gem.

Celestine turned her radiant eyes upon him. "I shall be delighted," she said, her voice a tone higher than usual through the stress of her excitement.

"Let's all go!" shouted Edward Blandy. "I thought I was dead sure to have the pleasure of escorting Miss Celestine to-night; but 'Fair and Fickle' is the motto of the profession, so I'll make it up by seeing her through the play, and leading the applause!"

"Misther Iddy would have it all shout an' no play, if he had his own way wid the actin', shure thin," interjected Munch as she brought in a pitcher of beer for the two actors' wives. "Oi think he takes afther his father, sometimes, so upsitting and full of the divil he is!"

A roar of laughter followed this, and Munch, affronted, withdrew.

"We'll get together a party and go," persisted Ed Blandy, with a jocular air. "Crœsus and I will make up a purse and take Ma along with us!"

Mrs. Blandy's earrings shook with satisfaction.

"That's just like my own pretty lad," she chuckled, "and if he's a little upsetting sometimes, why he loves his mother still. Dear bless my heart, how it makes me think of the days long before he was born, to be sure! For in Blandy's time, though connected with the profession, I never went near a theatre; our means were far too circumvented. And now my boy is taking me!"

Mrs. Blandy beamed at the ceiling of her dining parlor. "It's enough to make one thank Heaven!"

That night Celestine, rouged correctly, corsetted perfectly (Sallie Jewel had told her corsets of the right shape were a solid investment), and winged with glistening black fabrics run with gold, made one in a chorus of charming female Devils who literally stormed the house. Sallie Jewel, as the beautiful Archfiend, interpreted a topical song *à la Théo*, assisting with glances, gestures and audacity, the effect of her mouse-like soprano. The bewitching demons caught up the chorus of their leader's song, and tossed it through their numbers with abandon; and a brilliant *divertissement* was caused by the entrance of a trembling sandaled St. Anthony, whom they chased across the stage with enthusiasm and pursued into the wings. The phases of this original burlesque were diverting in the extreme; and when the curtain fell on a *pot pourri* of demons, tin soldiers, etc., etc., etc., the anchorite safe on the summit of Cleopatra's Needle, and the charming Archfiend tossing him a kiss with inimitable audacity, the roars of a satisfied and tickled house declared it a success.

"How do you feel?" inquired Sallie Jewel, with a little laugh. She had entered into her *rôle* with piquant humor and some satire, and still felt the enthu-

siasm of action like the glow of wine. "Listen to me, Celestine; I am going to a champagne supper to-night to drink to St. Anthony and the new burlesque. Several of the girls will be there, and a number of men I know. You can come along with me. It will give you an idea of the life we lead."

"Oh, Sallie, how I should enjoy it!" exclaimed Celestine, with glowing eyes. "But—" she suddenly ceased removing the rouge and white from her face. "But, I'd forgotten, I promised Mandeville Branding to eat some oysters with him at Dorlon's, and—he's waiting for me now!"

"He offers oysters: I offer champagne. Where is your feminine instinct?—it ought to guide you straight to the point!"

"But—oh well, I can't miss such a chance just for *him!* I'll tell him I can't come!"

"Of course," answered Sallie Jewel, coolly.

Branding was waiting for her as she said; she flew down the devious dim-lighted passages to where he stood at the stage door.

"I'm so sorry," she said to him with an accent of regret, belied by her brilliant eyes and color, "but you must excuse me going with you to Dorlon's just to-night. Sallie wants I should come with her, and I couldn't disappoint her. She's been so kind to me, you know, and—you won't get mad with me for breaking my promise, will you, Mr. Branding?" She laid her hand upon his arm.

"Naturally not, Miss Celestine. I hope you will enjoy your evening." He lifted his hat and left her quietly without another word.

His *amour propre* had been wounded, but he disregarded this.

"Poor little thing," he thought, as he made his way

along Broadway. "She is as innocent as a child, and all that folly dazzles her. It pains a man to see a girl like her given to the low life of the variety stage; only ten in a thousand fail to feel something of its corruption."

He walked through the gas glare, going with the tides of the thoroughfare which set from the closing theatres. The midnight life of the city was commencing, full of feverish hum and eager fret. A woman passed Mandeville Branding, and turned back a painted face with a glance of challenge. He did not reply to it, and his thoughts became almost painful to him as he went.

"It is terrible, terrible," he muttered. "The stage makes so many into *that*. She is innocent and young, and has gone into the midst of its temptations. If I had wealth I could change all that . . . . I would make her my wife."

He reached the house in Twenty-sixth street. They were supping hilariously in the kitchen, and he could distinguish the laughter of the lively blonde, and the *repartee* of Crœsus. The voice of McGuffey then lifted itself, and the angry tones of Munch; Mrs. Blandy chuckled loudly, and Edward Blandy gave a characteristic roar.

Mandeville Branding turned away with a weary expression of distaste, and climbed the stairs to his hall bedroom on the third floor. Here he lit the gas and set to writing, finishing an article criticising the burlesque, and concluding a short theatrical story. When he had put these aside he turned, with a resolute expression, to the drama he was writing.

"If I make a name with this," he thought, "I can earn enough to give her a little home and take care of her."

His gas burned far into the night, and with the enthusiasm of an artist in his moments of creation, mingled a hope more impassioned and dear, dedicated to the girl he loved.

"Come on, Celestine," said Sallie Jewel, putting the last touches to her arching eyebrows. "I'm ready, and Toller's coupé is waiting for us; *he* goes the pace!" And she passed out of the little tawdry dressing room and down the passages to the stage door. Her figure's perfect proportions and characteristic carriage indicated the pure blood of her unknown father, and in her pale eyes shone a swift elusive flame. A number of men were lounging around the stage doors of the Bijou; in her glance, for an instant, as it lighted on them, was a fierce contempt and rage.

"Ah, Sallie!"

"Say, Sallie, did you bring the Saint along?"

"Come on, Sallie, we want to drink your health as the Archfiend!"

"Sallie, you've got a good part, and I swear you played it for all it was worth!"

"Fellows, I'm thirsty; let's be off. Wallace will take the two girls in his coupé, and the rest have gone on before us. Come on! *Au revoir*, Sallie, *jolie diablesse!*"

Sallie Jewel stepped into the coupé; Celestine followed her. The light fell on the face of the man who was about to enter with them, and showed the features, grey, aged, and weary, of Wallace Toller.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SONGS OF GRIEG.

PETER AMBLEON'S conceit had interpreted literally the polite suggestion of Mrs. Varian, that his moose-hunt memories would figure well in print. He debated for some days and then began the work, in hours spared from the Empire City Bank, in a rambling, loose, unpunctuated style characteristic of his mind and methods. Spurred by the idea of attaining the self-complacent station of a writer of magazine articles whose wares are selling well, Peter exerted himself unusually, and after a month's hard labor concluded the tale of his early sport. He had meanwhile taken into his confidence Simon Jernegan, the learned dyspeptic, who occupied a desk next his.

"Ah—Jernegan," said Peter, one day when a fellow-clerk had fallen sick, and he had to do his work, "I—er—sometimes fear I shall have the scrivener's palsy."

"Is that so?" replied his colleague. "Well, I expect the Moose-hunt's one too many for you. It's somewhat of a wrastle for a man who's only done the mechanical sort of writing, you know, to commence piling on the ideas!"

Peter felt this an aspersion on his brain, which he classed with that of Aristotle (so far as he knew of him), and glanced towards the learned dyspeptic with distrust.

"Erghem," he ventured, clearing his throat, "I have nearly finished it. I assure you, Jernegan, to a

fellow—ah—who knows something of huma. nature, writing, diction and eloquence, that is, are easy work after all. In fact, a fellow feels in his element."

"I thought it was the nature of moose, Ambleon. I guess I was on the wrong track. Any way, come to my room when you get it through, and read it to me. I used to know something about writing once upon a time—before I entered the Empire City Bank."

Several weeks passed in silence regarding Ambleon's great work. He evaded any inquiries of Jernegan astutely, and kept his own counsel. He had contrived to give Tom Varian an idea of him which evoked a standing welcome from the generous-hearted broker. Considering him as a man whose early opportunities had wasted for want of enterprise to seize them, and who, in middle life, regretted the lost hopes of his youth, Varian, always over-lenient to other's failings, welcomed him to his house with open hospitality. Mrs. Varian endured him with grace, partly through appreciation of her husband's generous impulses, and partly from her own instinctive courtesy. Gladys he wearied to insufferable *ennui*, and time went on towards the end of the old year.

Mrs. Oriarte and Sydney had returned from Lenox late. They were the only friends amongst her wide circle of society acquaintances whom Mrs. Varian received.

One day, in the last month of the year, they remained with Mrs. Varian and Gladys through several hours of a dull and wintry afternoon. Some tea had been served, and the two girls had gone together to the piano.

Mrs. Oriarte watched her daughter's figure passing under the draped arches of the reception-rooms, to the large apartment, dimly suffused with ruby light from the high-hung lamp, where the piano stood.

"When I see them together, Marie, I do—I do feel

so bad to think of all you and Gladys had to leave. I wish there was anything in the world I could do to make it up to you. Don't get mad with me, dear, for I can't help thinking how I'd have felt if it had happened to my girl."

"I know your sympathy is genuine, Louise; it needs no apology."

Gladys was playing a Spanish mazurka whose rhythm had imprisoned the dreams and fire of the Southern lands. As the last chords sounded slowly and were lost, Sydney brought to her a book of Grieg's songs, and stood beside the desk.

Her face had lost the first exquisite expression of youth, that subtle beauty which childhood leaves until the touch of sorrow has lain on its hope and taught its joy reflection. "Gladys," she said, suddenly, in a swift, hushed voice. "I want to tell you something—to ask your help. Will you keep my secret? I do not think mother could understand, and I cannot tell her. . . . . I am so unhappy!"

"Unhappy—Sydney?" The grave soft eyes of Gladys filled with startled pain. "Could you be sad?"

A passionate look flashed over her face, like the play of lightning which changes the face of the sky to livid white.

"I am sad—if you could know! It seems to me as if my whole life lay before me, ruined. Gladys, you know how Douglas cared for me: he trusted my love for him as if I already was his wife, and I—I have learnt to know that beside the love that should be a wife's towards her husband, it is a mockery—a shadow." She paused, a cold pallor whitened her face; her pupils dilated on the iris. "Ever since the autumn came I seem to have become different; it is as if I had never really lived till then. When we were at

Lenox I was happy—so happy. I never knew why I felt so till it was too late. . . . Did you know Hugo Van Steen? He had made a fortune in Wall street in the last two summer months after terrible losses there. He came from Montreal two years ago; it had been his home till then, and I hear that his mother's death there had made him come away. His father was dead, and she had been all in all to him till the last. One day she was driving to meet him at the railway when her horses took fright and ran away. Her carriage was wrecked, and they brought her into the dépôt dead. . . . Afterwards he left Montreal, and spent time in New York and Washington. I had heard the story, and I felt so sad for him; he appeared cold and indifferent, but I seemed to see all he had suffered in his eyes. Douglas introduced him to me on the night of the last *fête* at Newport—you remember, the night before Mr. Gerard left to go to his brother in Paris. We met again at Lenox, and he was often with me. Douglas was in Europe that month, and I almost forgot. . . . Oh, Gladys, I did not know—I never thought why it was all so sweet to me! He cared for my singing, and I used to sing these songs to him, the songs of Greig. His eyes and the lines of his face grew soft as he heard them; they seemed to touch him, to make him think of the past, and yet to give him consolation. The time went by until the autumn leaves began to fall, and then one day I found I loved him. He was speaking to me of a faithful dog he had loved in his old home; his eyes looked straight before him with that silent repressed pain in them that I could not bear to see. And suddenly, as he finished, he touched my hand—here—and he looked into my eyes. . . . It was as if our souls had seen each other. I knew that he loved me then—and I loved him."

Slow tears dropped on the pages of the songs. Gladys laid her hand softly on the other's arm, and waited.

"What can I do? How can I help it? It is so terrible, so hopeless—!"

"Dear, I would give my life to aid you, but how can I advise? There are some things which leave us only the alternative—to endure."

Sydney looked into her face with a blank set agony in her eyes.

"He is so dear to me, and I can fill his loneliness; I can make up to him for all he has lost! How can I give him up?"

"And yet, as you love him, so Douglas loves you, Sydney." Gladys' voice trembled as she spoke.

"I know—" There was a strong slow horror in her words. "I—know. . . ."

"Sydney—child! I guess we must be going!"

Mrs. Oriarte's voice came to them, and Sydney laid down the book of songs with haste, yet lingeringly.

As she and Gladys entered the drawing-room, the two ladies were saying "Good-bye."

"Well, Marie, do come and see me. It seems so lonesome for me to come to you, and you to keep away as you do, dear. You'll be around some day soon, won't you?" She kissed her friend, who acquiesced.

At this instant Sandy, who had till then sat lazily blinking upwards, suddenly gathered his little quarters and sprang up Gladys' side towards her shoulder, where he immediately perched.

"The little love!" cried Mrs. Oriarte. "What a dreadful trick!—but he is so pretty." She caressed in passing his large ringed tail which swept across Gladys' bosom; he regarded her gravely with his wary amber eyes, and then took to washing his face with *aplomb*.

"Well, Jernegan—ah—I have finished the Moose hunt," said Peter Ambleon. That morning it had been returned to him with the stereotyped and ironical compliments and thanks of a prominent magazine. He had imagined, with exuberant secret hope, that the magazine might have accepted it and that he could then have appeared before Jernegan as a full blown literary flower. However, the sequel nipped him in the bud, and he was forced to resign himself to events and to try the effect of the fragment on his colleague.

"Right you are, Ambleon; wonders will never cease," returned Simon Jernegan, with promptness. "When am I going to see it? I'm something of a critic, and I might give you a hint or two, one way or another. A man's first work is never his best, any more than a tree's first yield of fruit. However, genius will blossom out; an indisputable fact—you've proved it. When shall I see the Hunt?"

"Say—ah—er—say Sunday night; you might come around to the Hansen, Jernegan."

"That's business. Eight o'clock sharp. It may do my dyspepsia good." Underneath these generous professions Jernegan concealed a purpose. He had some private conversation with young Harris that day as they left the bank; and that promising lad bid fair to blight his prospects of success in life by splitting his sides before they parted company.

"Say, Mr. Ambleon, I though I'd take a sort of a jaunt to some of the places of amusement around town. You're a kinder used to N'York, and I guess you can tell us where to go."

It was half-past seven on Sunday evening, in Peter's little room at the Hansen. The MS. of the Moose-hunt was spread upon a table, and Peter himself was observing young Harris's sharp countenance with

a certain suppressed uneasiness, which showed itself in a grotesque nerve-twitch above his eyebrow.

"Ah—Koster & Bial's," he said. "Plenty of young fellows go there and like it."

"I'm feeling a kind of lonesome to-night, and I want some gayety," complained young Harris. "May be that would fix for me. Say, Mr. Ambleon, are you engaged to-night? Can't you come along and kinder *chaperone* me?"

"I—ah—I *am* engaged this evening: Jernegan has asked me—er—has, in fact, pressed me to read him my Moose-hunt."

"I heard you had some writings on hand. Moose? I'm a great boy at wild beasts myself: most fine Sundays I frequent that 'nagery up at Central Park."

"It's a laudable feeling in young fellows," muttered Ambleon, looking at the clock.

"Say, Mr. Ambleon," exclaimed young Harris. "Won't you let me stop and hear? I guess it would beat the show at Koster & Bial's to nothing: anyway I—" Here Jernegan appeared.

"Harris, are you going to hear the article Ambleon's put together?"

"Well, sir, I can't say at present. I'm desirous."

Ambleon, partly flattered and partly constrained cleared his throat.

"Ah—I shall be happy," he said, with an open smile.

The reading continued till midnight: by heroic resolve the two clerks kept awake. Peter's droning voice had the somnolent effect of a softly-rolling tom-tom. Finally the article concluded.

"Ambleon, shake hands!" exclaimed Jernegan with vigor. "If it had been written by Harris here, I should say, 'My son, get out of the Empire City Bank, and strike for literary laurels: you've mistaken

your vocation.' As it's you I say it's a pity that the Empire City Bank has eaten up eighteen years which you might have used to great ends, sir!"

"Erghem! Jernegan, thank you."

"The only faults in the production are those of inexperience. If some man of perseverance and the inclination were to arrange that in slightly different shape, and punctuate it throughout, I would undertake to say that the *Luminary* would accept it readily."

Jernegan had hit on the name of the periodical where Ambleon had already sought unsuccessfully to bloom. The coincidence took effect.

"Ah—er—if such a man could be found I—I would share the profits with him," said Peter, with an equivocal smile and the nerve-twitch strong again.

"Our Learned Pig is the man, if I know a dollar from a cent!" blurted out young Harris enthusiastically.

"Would you—ah—could you do it, Jernegan?" said Peter, swallowing the bait.

"Well, Ambleon," replied the critic, "I should have to see how much work it would want. Balancing is what it needs, adjusting, turning adroitly here and there. If you care to give me the MS. I'll take it along and see about it. The stuff is splendid; there's material in it that ought to be put in the most advantageous light. It's worth putting in print and I think we could fix it so the *Luminary* would take it; if I can't find time for the work, I have a friend who is experienced that way, and he might undertake it."

After that Jernegan went off with young Harris at his heels, carrying the MS. under his arm, and leaving Peter Ambleon elate.

"Say, Mr. Jernegan, you ought to be President!" exclaimed the youth. "Won't we have some fun, you bet your life, with 'the late Mr. Ambleon.'

CHAPTER XV.

THE KING OF THE BULLS.

HUGO VAN STEEN had abandoned the strain and hazard of Wall Street. The lucky *coup* of the day in August following the Newport *fête*, had preceded a series of brilliant operations, which netted him half a million dollars before the departure of society to Lenox for the autumn. Varian, saved through his agency from the results of Greme's sinister calculations, was now established as a broker, and became peculiarly successful. Golden had sustained considerable loss, but had not met the fate of final bankruptcy which had overtaken many through the corner in Chicago and Great Western.

Greme had been consumed with a secret fury when Ambleon described to him the manœuvre by which Van Steen had outwitted them. In fact, he was swift to perceive that by this Varian had gone beyond his reach. As an operator, whose principal broker was Archie Ambleon, and whose schemes, however complicated, were thus placed under the immediate eye of Greme, the latter had him at his will; but as a broker, transacting a commission business in which he took no risk, he was practically beyond his influence. Greme recognized this, and remembered with added rancor the episode of the Inviolate Trust Co. which had been the prime cause of his enmity to Varian. With peculiar ingenuity, he devised the plan of inducing him to become the partner of Ambleon, guaranteeing the latter from loss by the ensuing bankruptcy of

the firm. However, the idea did not work; the overtures of Ambleon were declined by Varian, and shortly afterwards he entered into partnership with Edward Golden.

Unshackled by the dead weight of Ambleon's treachery and the combinations of Greme, Varian's ability, which had previous to his opposition by the King of the Bulls achieved the most signal successes, showed itself with renewed emphasis. The firm of Varian & Golden was regarded with confidence on the Street, and obtained a considerable *clientèle*. Their solid probity and far-sighted provision caused them to be generally relied on.

Winter trade was active, and from the money quarter rose its habitual hum and murmur, into which the chimes of old Trinity drifted a melancholy music as the hours went by.

Greme's cab had just driven up to his office, and the operator's lean figure and enigmatic eyes had been seen for a second as he alighted. The little Winskouper, who occupied a neat place of business in the same building, had entered earlier. Archie Ambleon was just sauntering into the Stock Exchange in time for the calling of the Regular List.

Presently railroad stocks were in order. Mr. Vice-President, attended by the Assistant Secretary, who recorded the bids and accompanying details, went through the list commencing with the mighty favorites of the market.

"Chicago and Great Western—what bids?" came from the rostrum.

"I'll take 500 at 48!" "Any part of 5000 at 48½!" "Sell 1500 at 49!" "Take 'em at '8¾." "Take 'em at '9." "Done." The transaction was entered, and the bidding went on.

"Ottawa Central, closed at 60."

"Take any part of 500 at 62," shouted Golden, who was bidding up the stock according to an order of Lemuel Shapira's. "I'll sell you 300 at 62." "Done!" The bidding for Central became animated after Golden's advance, which was regarded by some as an indication of a rise in the stock; and closed at 63.

The Empire City Railroad followed this, and five or six men joined to bid up the stock; one of these was Ambleon. Under their sharp manipulation the price rose five per cent, and sales of considerable importance were made. With apparent independence of each other's action, these half-dozen men combined to toss up the stock's price cleverly; they were working, however, in concert, and the sales made between themselves were hypothetical, part of a prepared campaign. They were the brokers of Greme.

A rumor was abroad later on that another scheme was on foot for consolidating the two Canadian railroads; and Ottawa Central stock was rising.

"Golden, you remember I told you of the money I have entangled in that enterprise?" said Varian. "It looks well for my getting it back with a handsome profit."

"Ah!" replied Golden. "Hartmann and Shapira are working together, I believe. It looks promising."

The Empire City Railroad had come into Greme's omniscient calculations after the corner in Chicago and Great Western, which had yielded him enormons profits. He purchased calls at three months, covering the whole capital stock of the road, and paid $300,000 on premiums. He then put half a dozen brokers into the Board with orders to bid up the stock; these he took care were men unknown as his agents; and the results were impending.

That morning Otterdorff, President of the Empire City Road, entered Varian & Golden's offices. Edward Golden was in the Long Room, and Varian alone.

"See here," said the potentate, with a smile. "I have come to give you the chance of making the largest short sale on record, Varian. You know Greme; well, I have information that he has a scheme of ballooning the stock of our road to twice its ordinary price, thereby realizing a vast profit on outlying calls he has secured. I am not going to permit this, and to-morrow the stock will drop from 150 to 105. Greme is a clever operator, but he has overlooked one point in his calculation; that a clause in our charter permits us (in readiness for this sort of emergency) to issue fresh shares on a 'construction pretext.' If Greme should succeed it would damage a combination of mine that I set considerable store on putting through. That wouldn't do. So it happens Greme must go. Anyway I give you the chance of benefitting through his failure, for that infernal affair of Chicago and Great Western was his gain, and crippled you: now its *vice versa*."

The magnate smiled astutely at Varian and left. He was usually an unsuspecting giant, and had often struggled in the nets of Greme, but now, having the chance of outwitting him, he felt a surpassing idea of his own shrewdness.

Varian and Golden consulted hastily. There was no doubt of the genuineness of the hint; and before noon the partners were offering large amounts of Empire City Railroad stock for future delivery.

"I expect we shall hear of Varian & Golden having broke in a short while," said the little Winskouper to Greme as they lunched together *vis-à-vis*. "They are offering any amount of Empire City stock on three

and ten day's options. I guess the Street's rather fuller of fools than I thought for, Mr. Greme." Her pale eyes sparkled as she smiled, and met the quick intensity of his regard. His thumbs beat on the table lightly.

"Is that so? Is that so?" he said. "Very good!"

"I guess they won't say so, after awhile," she answered, pouring some more champagne.

The day passed: Old Trinity's chimes echoed above the deserted business blocks, and the stones of its graves. Night fell and spent itself, and dawn broke over the city. It was the last day of the reign of the King of the Bulls.

Empire City had reached 168. Archie Ambleon sat in his office watching the ticker's ribbon. "This will make a rich man of me," he thought, with a self complacent smile. "If a man is not a great gun himself, his best move is always to fasten onto some other man who is. Peter's mistake: never looked after his chances. I did, and here I am!"

That day was one remembered on the Street. It terminated the three months after which the calls bought by Greme were to take effect. Men found themselves pledged to deliver stock at seventy per cent above its cost when the calls were bought; bulls were frantic with jubilation; bears were dead and dying all around; there was a species of panic. White heat of excitement was reached at mid-day; the stock was due to be delivered two hours later. The Long Room was in a tumult; it was reported that several large houses were heavily crippled; and a thousand wild rumors flew around. The intensity of feeling on all sides could only arise from the situations, startling and unparalleled, of veritable financial tragedy.

Greme himself awaited the climax in his office; his eyes brilliant with a pale fire, his sallow visage livid.

It was noon: the steam whistles began their chorus and their sound swept the length and breadth of the island. Ambleon reflected that it was time to go to luncheon, and took a last look at the length that glided down.

"Empire City R. R. stock at 100. Market broke after the direction's issue of fresh shares . . . ." Ambleon suddenly grew white. He thought he had seen wrong, and looked again. Then he grasped the full import of the words and sat gazing fixedly at the ticker's ribbon. Three months before he had sat there reading the rise of Chicago and Great Western to Varian.

"100!—100! Good God!" muttered Archie Ambleon desperately. "It will sink me, and break Greme!"

He sat there without a word for ten minutes; he was stunned. His brain was full of incongruous ideas which revolved like kaleidoscopic views; financial projects, society engagements, previous schemes for the future. He was trying to make out any expedient by which he could escape the single implacable word which seemed to fill the air around him: Ruin. He imagined at the same time Greme's expression on receiving the final intelligence, and Mrs. Belmore's air, as she cut him the week after his suspension on the Stock Exchange for inability to meet his engagements. He looked around his luxuriously-fitted office, and recalled, by a tantalizing impulse of memory, the little suite in the Hansen in contrast with his brother Peter's humbler basement room. Destiny had him on the hip; he even contemplated descending as low as that. The iron entered his soul.

The door of his office opened, and a person entered. He did not hear.

"Ah—Archie, I won a dollar or two at poker round at Schenk's rooms last night. I wish—er—you'd tell me how to place it? Is Keely Motor up?"

Archie sprang up and glared upon his brother. The appearance of Peter at that moment seemed like the materialization, embodiment and confirmation of his most torturing thoughts. Livid with mingled rage and apprehension. "Damn Keely Motor!" he shouted.

Peter retreated rapidly towards the door.

"Er—?" he quavered, making his usual prelude to speaking without any ideas remaining to go on with. Archie stood still, his eyes wild and his aspect becoming ferocious.

"Do you mean to say you have the audacity to come droning around here about Keely Motor!—when you know I'm ruined in this Empire City swindle? Good God, I'd like to break your neck!"

Peter, though in fear of his life, had regained the power of speech.

"Ah—Archie—" he faltered, "I think you must have suddenly—er—gone raving mad. Are you a maniac? Don't you know Peter—?"

"—— -- ——!" vociferated Archie, nearly rabid, all things considered. "Know Peter? I think I do know Peter! The only man in New York City who ever has anything to trouble him! Of course! I know Peter, you bet!" He was almost frantic.

"Archie," expostulated Peter Ambleon, holding the door ajar in case of danger, "This is—erghem—unbrotherly conduct. My troubles—ah—are genuine. You speak as if I was a fraud."

The younger Ambleon, fairly frenzied, rushed at his brother madly. "—— —— your troubles, you d—d old hoax! I've got more troubles in my little finger now than you ever had in your whole body!"

The door clapped to in his face with a shivering clash of its ground glass panels. Peter was on the safer side of it. Archie found himself alone.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LAST MESSAGE OF THE PASSING YEAR.

IT was Christmas week; the city was preparing for the reception of the New Year. Christmas is the festival of American children; New Year's that of the whole people. Carriages stood in rank before Tiffany's: a kind of haste and prodigality seized every woman who had a dollar to spend; manufacturers of certain specialties worked double tides; in the window of Macy's the gaudy panorama prepared for Christmas still moved along, with ill-dressed hundreds before it; the giant patrolman at Twenty-third street and Broadway beat his hands together cased in mighty gloves of fur, when he was not engaged in escorting a bevy of timid female creatures across to the corner of the Fifth Avenue Hotel; there the grand entrance had double weather doors to exclude the cold, and the eternal loungers had taken themselves into the vestibule.

The day of the slump in Empire City stock was the last of the Old Year.

The afternoon was clear, with brilliant skies, and snows that hung white beauties on the trees and drifted in the garments of the great bronze Seward like ermine borderings. Gladys went out alone; through the quiet ways by Gramercy Park and Madison avenue. She sometimes spent hours in the great uptown Cathedral which stood open through the year. There she found refuge from the pain of her life and the barren silence of her future; the vast calm of its tranquil

shrines seemed to soothe her like some divine caress. She went to her accustomed seat on the north side of the church, by the grey gigantic foot of a stone roof-pillar. Here she looked towards the altar of the Blessed Sacrament, where a little lamp burned like a ruby, and as she looked, she prayed.

The great south windows were dim, and glowed sombrely, darkening the cathedral with their painted shadow; the little lamp was flickering softly in slow passing breaths of wind. The atmosphere of the place took hold upon her like the heavy perfumes of burning incense; she felt a great fatigue and the exquisite languor of repose.

An hour went by; Gladys, as she rested in the solemn calm, felt a great warmth of faith and consolation. Old thoughts and hopes came by her, on the last day of the old year; an indefinable influence softened her pain, she looked forward, and wondered if a time would come when it also should have drifted to the past.

She was very pale when she left the Cathedral, and passed down the wide stone steps into the street. The sun was near setting in a sky of faint green and royal amber light; carriages passed up and down Fifth avenue, and sleighs with clear toned bells. Gladys turned down on the eastern pavements where fewer people walked, and pursued her way swiftly; she saw that dusk would have fallen before she reached her home.

The light of the sunset touched her face with a tranquil glory as she went, and lingered on the noble lines of her brows and drooped eyelids.

The murmur of the city's life drifted about her; the chimes of sleigh bells rang across the snow; carriages passed in which lounged women whom she had known,

there was the outward show of that existence to which she had belonged. But she gave no heed to this; she was with her own thoughts in the past, the past which had been hers in the dead hours of the old year which was dying.

A man was coming up the avenue towards her: his strong and supple figure advancing rapidly. He took in every line of her face and form which the light of the sunset touched with lingering radiance.

"God! she is changed," he thought, and his dark eyes glittered as he looked. As he approached her Gladys felt the indefinable influence of his presence, that subtle warning which visits a woman who loves when her beloved comes near her. She had not seen him, but the perceptions of the soul, swift, mysterious, unerring, acknowledged his approach. Her physical strength seemed to leave her: her pulses beat with a slow and stifling throb: she raised her eyes.

He was close to her; their regard met for a second as they passed. She felt a kind of agony, all the pain of her life had been told in the words, "He did not love me." In the instant of their encounter she remembered this blindly, and she made no sign.

He was gone. With her there was no word, smile, gesture, expression, to return the caress of memory. She went on instinctively into darkness with the lines of his face before her.

That afternoon Mrs. Varian had received a brief despatch from her husband, "Golden will dine with us to-night."

She had made preparations for his coming, and sat by the fire in the drawing-room as dusk was falling. The flames cast swift shadows all about, and touched the old clock where it stood; reflections quivered across the steel and gold of its inlaid dial as it chimed

the quarter-hour and its whispering tick went on. Sandy lay on her lap, his shining amber eyes half opened to the fire, while he irregularly purred. A planet shone through the darkening sky between the spires of the church.

Gladys passed down towards Union Square, where electric lights, high lifted above the snow-laden trees, burned like a coronal of icy flame. Business men were coming up-town rank and file; the after-glow threw gold reflections on the high windows to the east; a little lad with Spanish eyes ran by calling shrilly the *Evening Telegram,* and an organ was sounding slowly and hoarsely, with a hopeless dull voice, through the street noise. Gladys turned down a street towards the east, away from the animation of infinite life in the thoroughfare, going fast to her home through the falling dusk. Far off some lonely lamps gleamed, where the fading sky was dyed with faint color.

Gladys rang the gong at the entrance, where the two columns of dark marble stood before the door. The hall was dimly lighted, and the stern portrait of Washington looked down upon her sombrely. She felt a sort of fever in her blood, and pressed her hot brows against the chill polished surface of the stone. Sandford's heavy step sounded on the mosaic hall inside, and as she relinquished her hold upon the pillar, he opened the door and saluted. She passed him with a mechanical smile, and entered the drawing-rooms.

Sandy, hearing her step, uncurled his yellow length, and came towards her, arching his little back. She did not see him. She seated herself in a velvet chair by the hearth, and stretched her hands towards the fire-warmth: all her blood seemed to flow in choking tides about her heart.

"Well, my Gladys," said Mrs. Varian, with her

habitual expression of caress. "You are late. I am expecting your father and Mr. Golden every moment."

"Yes, mother."

She hardly heard; she was recalling the seconds of their meeting; the eyes of Gerard were again before her, and she attempted to analyze the expression they held. Sandy sprang into her lap and coiled there in a lazy ball, and as he did so Varian let himself and Golden in with his latch-key. The two men entered the drawing-room, unlit but by the mellow fire-glow, and Varian's face was bright with a brave look his wife had known there in the years of his early toil for wealth.

"Marie," he said gently, going towards her and taking her hands in his vigorous grasp, "We have something to tell you and Gladys. A turn of the market has made us richer by five hundred thousand dollars."

Mrs. Varian's hand turned cold in his; a white tinge spread across her face. She could not speak, but looked into his eyes.

"It is the last gift of the old year, Marie; he brought us pain, and now—this is to make us hope and forget, dear."

Gladys had risen, holding the little yellow beast against her breast. Her face gleamed like marble in the dusky fire-light; her eyes were large and luminous where the pupil spread broad and shadowed the iris. She crushed the little creature in her arms unconsciously till he gave a complaining whine. Through the tumultuous flow of her own new thoughts she comprehended that Varian's trial was past, and her mother's pain for him gone by. The perpetual repression of herself was no longer imposed upon her for their sake; and under a thousand r gled

thoughts and impulses she felt a full and noble joy in their relief. She laid her hand on Varian's arm and looked into his face.

"Father, I am glad," she said, with one of her luminous, eloquent smiles. He took her in his arms and kissed her brow.

"But for you and your mother, Gladys, I should not have found new courage to go on. She is a noble woman, and you are worthy of her."

Golden had stood in the background until then: he came forward with a few plain words of simple sympathy. He had been supremely moved by the scene which had passed before him, and his impulses of feeling impelled him to offer the tribute of his genuine and earnest well wishing. As he spoke to Varian and shook his hand, Gladys, still with Sandy in her arms, turned away and quietly passed towards her own apartment.

Gerard went on up Fifth avenue with a latent light in his eyes. A half smile parted his lips concealed by the mustache; she had revived in him the feelings which had risen on the night of the Newport ball, intensified by new impressions. Since he had last seen her sorrow had made perfect the beauty which had touched his passion, and subtly altered her. That night he had divined the secret of her unacknowledged love: now, as her eyes went up to his, like those of a creature blinded and afraid, he knew that she loved him. He smiled.

"A woman is never perfect till she has felt all that," he thought. "Before, she is no more human than a beautiful marble: after—either a devil, or divine!"

Gladys entered her room, a little pale-walled place, very simply furnished, with a high narrow window

over the yard between two communicating houses. She had refused to have any trouble taken with it when they came to the apartment, and, with the pure white linen of the bed, the pale walls and the faintly tinted doors, it might have belonged to some young nun. There was no light when she entered, and the soft darkness soothed her insensibly. The events of the two previous hours whirled before her in a series of vivid mental phases, which assumed to her mind a certain unreality like the phantasmagoria of a dream. She endeavored to reason, to consider, to obtain an indication of the future; but her strained brain blurred successive images and conclusions into an elusive mass; and from a confused disorder of hopes, fears, memories and desires, rose one single clear idea: the face of the man she loved. It was like an impression of fire before her: and she felt rising the uncontrollable and mighty power of his influence upon her.

As she sat so, the door opened softly, and Mrs. Varian's arms were about her.

"Dearest, it is ended at last; and now I can tell you how I love you for your brave help, the sacrifice that you concealed from even me. We can speak together of it now: before—I could not."

Gladys strove to keep calm her voice, as she answered:

"Mother, it was no sacrifice; I would have given my life to help you then, and give him comfort in his trouble. . . ."

Mrs. Varian pressed kisses on the girl's forehead and soft hair.

"Dear, you thought I could not tell, but I knew how you were suffering: I divined how you suppressed the traces of your feeling for his sake. My darling, my darling, it was worth while! The sad days have gone

by and the New Year will bring you only new happiness!"

Gladys was quivering with subtle nerve-tremors; this was like touching on a physical hurt. "I know how you care for my happiness," she said; her voice was weak with the exhaustion of renewed emotion. Then she held the hand that caressed her to her lips, and kissed it silently.

In the darkness the little yellow beast laid himself upon her lap, and purred. His eyes, like luminous golden orbs, turned upwards, glowing as he lay.

"My Gladys," said Mrs. Varian, "I saw in the passenger-list of the Elbe in this morning's *Herald*, the names of Mr. Gerard and his brother. He has come back."

The girl drew a short noiseless breath. "I met him this afternoon," she said, in a strained voice. The tension was becoming intolerable.

"This summer you will see him at Newport. Darling, do not blind me; it is cruel, when you know how dearly I love you, and how I wish to make your future bright. Tell me, are you glad?"

Gladys was suffering incalculably; the most sensitive chords of her soul were jarred with indescribable dissension. She could not evade the question, whose answer would reveal the attitude of her mind; and it seemed impossible to her to lay bare the conflicting motives of her heart. She nerved herself strongly; her cold hands crushed together, and spoke at last:

"Mother, it is right I should tell you this, but it is very bitter to me. I love him, though I know that he has never loved me in return; my soul is his—I cannot help it. But it is agony to me to think of meeting him again as you say in Newport; of speaking to him as if I was indifferent, and seeing him without response.

I shrink from it—I am afraid——! The pain would be too great: I should betray myself. . . ." Her voice shook; her heart was beating violently. She remembered the last hour of the Newport ball, and her supreme effort to disguise her soul in calm. She knew his absolute power upon her and she feared with intense and mastering misgiving. Her nature shrank from the moment of the test as a nerve from the severing steel of the surgeon.

Mrs. Varian comprehended at last, and felt at once poignant relief and regret.

"Gladys!—why did you never tell me? It was not then alone the pain of parting, but you have been grieving for him as one lost forever!" She paused for a moment and took in hers the cold hands of Gladys, which she kept against her heart. "Why did you not trust me, my dearest? I could have told you enough to comfort you. You had no experience, and could not see what I saw—that he had begun to love you. Because—"

"But if he had loved me he would have asked me to be his wife!"

"You are yet a child, though you have the fidelity of true women; and you do not comprehend the phases and stages of men's feelings. Perhaps he did not love you then, but he was attracted by you; and when he was called to Paris, he went, intending to speak when he returned. My darling, you are no coquette; you feel too deeply and purely to condescend to that; and it is women whose aim is conquest and whose incentive is vanity, who know men and can discern the degrees and subtleties of passion. They play at love, watching every chance; you only feel. You have suffered very much without cause, I fear; but that is all gone by now, dearest, and you will be

happy again. Do not fear to meet him, do not think that he will penetrate your disguise. Be to him the same as ever, and you will renew in him the feelings which you have already created. You are beautiful, infinitely pure, and very young: these are not things a man passes with indifference. Have courage; do not needlessly give yourself pain. Trust in my experience: perhaps, when this time next year has come, you will be his happy wife!"

Mrs. Varian ceased; the sympathy and pity she felt had shown itself in unusually pregnant phrases and long argument in her efforts to console and to convince her daughter. She sat quietly, holding the girl's hands within her own; feeling the rushing blood in their pulses, and waiting for her to speak.

Gladys remained silent, the words of her mother beating on her brain with recurrent force; going over in a few seconds the series of indications, disguised and cruel, given by Gerard on the night of the ball. A wild and supreme hope, terrible in its controlling force, followed on the set despair of the last months. The poignant emotions she had felt since the calm of the cathedral was upon her, culminated now in a passionate climax.

"Mother," she whispered, the pride of her reserve and silence breaking down in sudden weeping. "You have been so good—you have helped me—you have saved me! You cannot know how I have suffered."

Mrs. Varian closed around the girl the tenderness of her protecting arms, and laid her head down on her shoulder.

Sandy, with a little troubled whine, rubbed his arching back against her throat, and endeavored to add his quota of caress, with a sort of deprecation.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FLOW OF THE WATERS.

"WELL, Ambleon," said Jernegan, one day, "my friend has gone over the great Moose hunt, and kinder supervised it. He says it will be sure to fetch the *Luminary* and bring down glory on your head. I've got it at my room right now; supposing I send it off for you? Save trouble, you know." And the learned dyspeptic looked benevolent.

Peter Ambleon coughed. He knew it would also save stamps, and since Archie's crash in Empire City, he had felt the sort of personal misgiving a man has when an earthquake has upset his neighbor's house.

"Well—er—Jernegan, you're very good. Ah, I shall be delighted."

In Wall street, things were serious for more men than one who had speculated on the rise of the Empire City. Margins had been swept away; the consequences of the stock's decline were as disastrous and general as those of a freshet. In his supremacy, Greme had been as merciless as he was mighty; in his fall he involved as many men in ruin as by his most superb and successful operations.

The King of the Bulls was down: his confidential broker Ambleon's name was recorded on the fatal list of those unable to meet their obligations, and the little Winskouper, entangled closely in the nets whose knotting she had assisted, adroitly transferred her abilities into the profitable service of Lemuel Shapira. Golden smiled at what he saw.

Mandeville Branding worked double tides after the first night of the new burlesque. He was rapidly completing the drama on which he had based the hopes of his future, and had evoked the sympathy of the actor Gore, who offered to speak of it to Halleck. This encouraged the young man to spend on it his strongest efforts; and on reading the play to the celebrated manager, was offered a handsome sum for it. To Branding, as to Golden, the new year seemed to bring new courage and success. With his artistic delight in the creation mingled a strong and tender hope which added an absorbing interest to his life.

Celestine's coarse-fibred nature found enchantment in the luminous gauzes of her burlesque costume; in the little Satanic horns of gilt which the demon-corps wore, to a fiend; in the ability to rouge correctly, an accomplishment taught her by Sallie Jewel; in the novelty of theatrical life, conversation, and midnight suppers; in the whole superficial and empty show which impressed her with a puerile self-complacency. She saw in all her surroundings repeated reminders of her success in "getting on in the world!" and felt an increasing arrogant faith in her own powers. She was gratified by the attentions of Branding, which were delicate and unremitting; these represented to her the first assurances of her ability to command. Her dark, coarse beauty, aided by mental content, and enhanced by the magic rouge-pot, became more marked, and the artifices of the dressing-room disguised the red skin of her hands and arms, an inexcusable plebeian blemish.

January was passing, and the popular burlesque continued to run at the Bijou. Sallie Jewel had left the Hotel Blandy and was established handsomely uptown by a broker notoriously profligate

Her horses were magnificent, and her equipage rivalled that of the Idol of the Emeralds in Central Park. Consistent in her professions of friendship, she still saw Celestine frequently, and drove beside her at the hour of the favorite drêss parade of Fashion. These were supreme moments in Celestine's existence, when, completely attired in one of the minor costumes of her friend, she appeared beside her and exchanged familiar nods with the *habitués* of the stage doors and front rows of the Bijou, amongst whom appeared young brokers and the gilded youth of the Empire City. Celestine missed the former daily opportunities of intimately observing her model; but these resplendent hours compensated her for everything.

It was at this time that Branding received Halleck's flattering offer for his play. He usually attended Celestine from the theatre each night, and was waiting for her at the stage entrance when she and Sallie Jewel appeared together.

"Don't trouble, Mandeville," said Celestine, laughing: she had fallen into the careless theatrical custom of calling men by their first names. "It's all right: I'm tired to-tight, and Sallie is going to drive me home."

Branding was at a disadvantage. He had aimed to tell her of his success and to evoke from her sympathy which would have completed his sense of serenity and hope. To see her with Sallie Jewel jarred on his delicate feeling of respect for her youth and innocence, and he was silent. Celestine had not the perception to divine this, but Sallie Jewel's intuition comprehended. Her flickering pale eyes rested on him with immeasurable irony. "Is it possible," she thought, "that in this age there is a man who feels like that?"

"You will come with us, Mr. Branding," she said with an indefinable smile.

"You are very kind," he answered with hesitation. He saw that unless he accepted her offer he would lose the chance of speaking to Celestine that night and his desire to do so overcame his reluctance. He entered after them; and the horses, dashing their noisy chains, started swiftly.

Celestine and Mandeville Branding entered the Hotel Blandy together.

"Well, good night," she said, with careless nod, commencing to mount the stairs. Branding stopped her.

"I want to speak to you," he said. "You must listen a moment, Celestine."

His tone was one of supplication: she never allowed him to feel certain of her, and therefore he paid her the tribute of persuasion and appeal which few women are sufficiently skilful to command. In this she followed the subtle counsels of Sallie Jewel, in her way a *maîtresse femme.*

"Oh, I can't talk to-night; I'm tired," laughed Celestine, her color brilliant, showing her strong white teeth. "Do you want me to—awfully?"

"I do," he answered with urgency. "I do. Don't be unkind, Celestine!"

"Well," she said, coming lightly down the stairs, "what is it you want then?"

They entered the "parlor" of the house; it was deserted, and the gas turned low. Branding made more light, and took his seat beside her, where she was lounging carelessly on a frayed red satin-covered sofa, the pride of Mrs. Blandy's life. He looked at her a moment before speaking; her sparkling eyes and smile, which typified in his thoughts her pure and happy youth, stirred in him passionate emotions. He was unable to detect in them the coarse triumph which filled her.

"I have sold my play, Celestine," he said; he watched her face, and his voice contained an inflection of appeal. Perhaps he expected from her a gesture or look of sympathy; at least he sought for it. In one's young moments of hope and enthusiasm what mirror should reflect one's heart so completely as the eyes of the woman beloved?

"Yes?" she answered, glancing at the clock. "Sold it; that is right. And how much did you get?"

The words and action were too significant. Branding felt as if he awakened from soft dreams with a frozen grip upon his heart. He looked at her with a kind of despair.

"Do you not care?" he said.

She turned her black eyes upon him with a hard triumphant look, still smiling:

"Why should I?" she laughed.

He was silent under the most crushing and remorseless blow he had ever suffered; he looked at her like a man struck blind.

"Well," she said, "is that all you want, Mandeville? If there's nothing else, I'm going up stairs."

An inexplicable impulse forced him to seize her arm as she went by. He was very pale; and the expression of his lips and eyes was indescribable.

"Celestine, why have you made me hope?" he demanded. "You had no right—"

The smile on her face disappeared, a dull flush of anger suffused her brows, her blunt mouth assumed its peculiar brutal expression of defiance.

"Leave hold of me!" she exclaimed. "Let go! I don't belong to you; I'm not your wife; and *you* have no right to touch me!"

The abrupt change in her produced on him a sickening impression of defeat and disillusion. He still

hardly comprehended all that underlay the cast-off mask; with a kind of despair upon him he crushed his grip upon her shoulder. "Celestine—you are fooling me! say you are fooling me, for the mercy of God! This can't be real—"

"You hurt me! you bruise my arm, and it will show black to-morrow night!" she cried, grinding her teeth with impotence and rage. "Leave hold of me, I say!"

Branding's arm fell by his side. A nerveless apathy assailed him. He comprehended at last the nature of the woman on whom he had spent his noblest feelings.

"I thought you were an innocent young girl," he uttered. "I would have made you my wife. I had toiled to complete that play; I thought the money I got for it would begin to make us a home. I loved you—I hoped—O my God! my God!" he forgot her presence in his mastering pain. She looked at him quietly, and smiled.

"Do you think the life of a beggar's wife is the kind of life for a girl like me? Not quite. I can do something a little better for myself than that. There are others love me beside you:—I'm going to leave here to-morrow for a place of my own uptown."

Branding looked at her for a minute with a slow intensifying loathing on his face.

"The woman I wanted for my wife was pure," he said, very low, in a calm and even voice. "I did not know you then."

She laughed again, with supreme audacity; the words went by her like dead leaves.

"If you could have got me, you would not say that," she answered. "You shouldn't feel finer than my new friend does, with seven millions at his back. A poor fellow can't afford nice feeling; it's not appropriate. Good night."

"Ambleon," said Simon Jernegan, handing a letter to his colleague, "this came for you to my care, to-day. I surmise that the Moose-hunt has gone, seen, and conquered."

Peter opened the note with the nerve-twitch strong above his eyebrow. Glancing over it, "Erghem—" he quavered.

"Well, sir?" said the dyspeptic, interrogatively. He glanced towards young Harris, at the nearest desk, whose large projecting ear was spread.

"Hem—I'm afraid your friend has—er—ah—not improved it very much," gasped Peter. He had lost a month's pay on Total Wreck, and his neuralgia ached him. His large damp hand trembled so he dropped the editorial epistle.

"Let's see, Ambleon." Jernegan picked up the letter handily and ran his eye across it. "'Sir,' (he read), 'it must be by some unexampled oversight that you have a second time forwarded to us a MS. previously rejected, viz., 'Moose Tracks, by an Old Moose Hunter.'"

"Ah—your friend must have added 'Old,' Jernegan." Peter's conceit was touched.

"'We are not,'" the dyspeptic continued, ignoring him, "'in the habit of editing and revising unavailable fragments, as you seem to imagine, and will be glad to hear your instructions on the subject of your article's return, as we repeat we are unable to accept it. Yours, etc., Editor *Luminary*.'"

Peter, unable to get the thing away from his colleague, was wincing at this irate castigation. Young Harris' ear got red with self-repression.

"Good Lord, Ambleon!" ejaculated Jernegan, "then you sent it off there before I saw it? No wonder he got mad!"

Here young Harris' huge mirth broke forth, ending appositely in a sneezing fit; old Clinch, the President of the Empire City Bank, appeared, showing over the building a magnate from the West, and the episode terminated. Peter's agony, however, lasted, like the fire in a burn.

The residence on Madison avenue had been rented for six months, and notwithstanding returning wealth, Mrs. Varian preferred remaining in the apartment to moving into a second house until the Newport season's commencement. However, she again permitted herself the comfort of a carriage, having sold the contents of the coach-houses at the time of Varian's ruin, and drove frequently with Gladys in the Park, where the keen air restored to them elasticity and strength. Here a new equipage made its appearance, rivalling that of Sallie Jewel in richness and eccentricity of appointment, and drawn by a pair of cream-colored horses which came near those of Jesse B. Hartshorn in value, breeding and effect. They belonged to Celestine Lovelight, who was getting on in the world, and, like *nouveaux riches* and mushroom aristocracy, assured herself and others of the fact, by keeping proofs of it on exhibition. Occasionally one saw the face of Wallace Toller beside her, incredibly aged and changed. The poor fellow's father had died of apoplexy at the time of his recovery, and he was in possession of his large inheritance, which he employed in feverish and mirthless dissipation. His final rejection by Gladys had taken on him an effect at once quenching and inflaming; a kind of despair invading the the sources of his soul, left him no drug but reckless excitement and unrest. His emotions, the pure and ardent feelings which Gladys had evoked, were numbed: his father's death left the iron-bound presence of his sister

dominant in his home: he had no resource or alternative but this futile and unworthy endeavor to forget. Celestine and Sallie Jewel now exchanged hospitalities, and drove together behind the cream-colored steppers in superb costumes: the former Eliza Hickson gratifying her passion for extravagant display, by adopting those effective combinations of black and shades of ruby or orange which, according to Sallie's infallible perceptions, threw up the colors of her flesh. One day the carriage of Mrs. Varian passed them: it contained Gladys, alone. Celestine started violently and her black eyes fastened on the pale lines of the face with a treacherous flash.

"See there!" she exclaimed to Sallie Jewel. "That's she—the one I told you of!"

"I thought you once said that her father had broke on the Street," answered Sallie, taking in every detail with one of her peculiar flickering elusive glances.

"He did," replied Celestine, with a rancorous tone in her insincere light voice. "Of course he did. I can't see how he ever got on his legs again in this time, either." The accent of regret and disappointment was so strong that Sallie turned her head and coolly studied the face of her companion.

"It seems to me you would be better satisfied if he hadn't," she intimidated, quietly, with an ironical smile. "I thought you owed his wife a debt of gratitude."

Celestine blushed through her rouge and around it; she felt no compunction for the part she had played towards Gladys, or the fabrication regarding Gerard which she had passed off on Sallie; but the subtle pale light in the latter's eyes had the power of unnerving her. She felt under it as if the secrets of her mind and memory were revealed. However, inwardly fur-

ous—"I guess I've got enough now to pay off any debts of that sort at notice," she answered with repressed defiance.

Sallie lifted her eyebrows with a slight suggestive indication of contempt, and glanced away. She had watched the episode of Branding to its termination, and began to obtain a genuine impression of the character of Celestine. She observed the outwardly refining effects of her own influence and example, with a certain amusement; distinguishing keenly the inner disguised brutality of the London gutter-rat.

"There are creatures whose distinctive attribute is their venom; others, which are gifted with fidelity and patience; if there are more of the first than of the last, we have the reconciling knowledge that the good God made it so." Sallie Jewel meditated with a sort of cool bitterness; she was not accustomed to deceive herself. However, the friendship between them continued; it was one of the fixed ideas of Sallie Jewel that no one was capable of improving on acquaintance; on this ground she made allowances.

During this time Toller saw little of his old friend Miss Van Kleeck; he was so completely aimless and unhappy that he could not even endure the reminder of the past suggested by her lively face. She went on the customary round of receptions, luncheons, theatres and germans; women called her an old maid, but men, who are always impartial, said she was a very pleasant girl and knew how to entertain a fellow. However, though her pretty *tout ensemble* and lively blue eyes were generally welcome, she did not marry. She had previously found Love a disappointing god, and drifted on, unmated, with a smile upon her lips.

"Released" made a hit at Halleck's. The manager had seen its points and made rapid arrangements

for producing it. Gore and Pell had leading parts, and the capricious May Ogden filled the *rôle* of heroine. Society went *en masse*, and applauded; the Press sent discriminating delegates, and applauded; and finally the Public, led by fashion and critiques, clinched the business by bringing its offering of dollars and previously formed approval. Poor Gore played superbly, and created his part with genius; but his evil star was in the ascendant, and prompted the variable Ogden to have transported at great cost, risk and trouble, a live Brazilian beetle, whose habit was to light up surprisingly at night, and which she wore on the bosom of her dress secured by a delicate hoop and chain of gold. This dress and attachment she had on during the culminating crisis of the play, when it was Gore's part to go through a passionate scene with her: the supreme climax of interest. The actor's enthusiasm, absorbed in his *rôle*, made him perilous to the life of the beetle, who continually wandered around on the corsage, and whose location Gore forgot to ascertain. In consequence, on the play's first night the poor mite nearly suffered death, and on other occasions the actor was repulsed at the supreme moment by an urgent whisper: "Mind the bug!—Not so hard—Percy!!—You'll smash my bug!" Poor Gore desperately cursed the insect, which became a kind of periodical nightmare and extinguished his genuine interest in his part; and finally his wife heard of the matter from the superficial Ogden. This was the end. Mrs. Gore introduced the subject at the dinner table, and whined at him daily on behalf of the insect, which she felt, like herself, to be the victim of his native cruelty. Munch became filled with fervid indignation and barely repressed her feelings in public: in fact she finally indulged in a muttering soliloquy

behind Gore's chair which reached the ear of his wife, and sent Ed Blandy from dinner in a choking state.

The first night was the only one on which its author went to see his play; a proscenium box had been offered to him, and he watched its progress through the first act with absorption. He had entered just as the curtain was rising, and had not lifted his eyes from the stage till the drop-curtain had fallen. Then he swept a rapid glance around the house as the last applause drifted to silence. His regard met that of Celestine Lovelight, leaning on the ledge of the opposite box. She wore velvets of an indescribable red, which caught the gleams and depths of the rubies burning at her throat and breast. A *fichu* of black lace trailed across the ledge of the box and drifted indistinctly down, and on this her arm was resting. Her eyes, large and lightning with triumph, looked into his. She smiled. Branding with an incalculable effort, met the look calmly and turned his eyes away. He remained during the rest of the performance, inspired by the determination to resist her effort to produce upon him any visible effect. But his creation became penetrated by her influence; it was after this forever intolerable to him. He heard and saw with a perception intense and torturing, and when the final applause was mingled with demands for the author, a hideous sensation of chaos and sinking seized him; the house reeled before him like a mighty blazing wheel, across which fell rubies, as if drops of blood were falling. He was livid, but he held himself erect by a supreme endeavor. He only saw her smile. Then he staggered within the box, and seated himself where the curtains concealed him. He was found there insensible later; the ordeal had been too unsparing.

Time went on towards the spring. It was Easter,

and the last of the winter was gone. The trees and bushes in the Square, on which a few of the old year's sere brown leaves still clung pathetically, were budding with swelling points of green: while the sparrows came choosing the twigs for their nests. There seemed some elusive charm and influence risen, magic with unnamed enchantment of new beauty. The spirit of spring was working; a perfect and pure elixir thrilled through the air. With the sunbeams seemed to stir a hidden life, diffusing itself in the soul of Gladys. She welcomed the coming of the spring; it is sweet to be young in the youth-time of the year.

The early summer came; a new atmosphere pervaded the little pale-walled room where Gladys had endured some of the fiercest suffering she had known. Hope had returned to her. The long window over the yard stood open; now and then chattering Irish voices broke out, like a quarrel of monkeys, from the basement of the surrounding houses; but the days were generally tranquil, filled with sunlight and the winds of late spring, whose fresh gale seems to have filtered through young leaves and wild field flowers. Through the hours ran the rippling treble trill of a distant piano sounding; the performer played continually a certain original delicately brilliant theme, exquisitely indescribable, which thrilled and tinkled through all Gladys' later memories of the time. From her drawer of laces when unshut, diffused a rare delicate lingering perfume of heliotrope through the air.

Finally Varian, with his wife and Gladys, returned to the cottage at Newport for the season.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NEWPORT.

NEWPORT was *en fête*. The Prince of Monte Carlo had just arrived; had subscribed to the Casino, shown himself at the afternoon review on Bellevue avenue, and accepted the invitation of Mrs. Belmore to appear at a ball projected in his honor.

"He must be such an interesting man," said the Idol of the Emeralds, the morning after his arrival, in the Horseshoe Gallery. "I'm sure I read a book about him when I was a girl: full of the most surprising things. He was going to be married, and was suddenly taken off by those dreadful *gensd'armes* creatures they have in France, and put into a tower or somewhere. The poor girl never heard of him again, and he met with some one—I think it was a horrid old priest who had fits—who told him of an island full of money that he knew of. Somehow he got out, and found this island and bought a title with some of the money. I don't quite remember the story now, but I thought he was a Count then. I suppose he has been made a Prince since that."

"Fancy!" exclaimed Mrs. Loftus Scaler, "how much one misses by not possessing a literary turn of mind. I had not heard of it. He must be quite a decillionnaire; real estate is so high, and a whole island ought to be a good investment. I suppose it brings him in a princely revenue;—the book might tell us how much, perhaps."

Mrs. Scaler's pale eye lighted up; her commercial training had left her with a firm fondness for facts condensed in figures.

Belmont Van Blancken was listening, with a sort of alarm upon his face. "I say," he gasped, "it's not fair to catalogue a fellow—put him down in a book as if he was a blooded horse. I wouldn't stand it!"

Caprice, who had been listening with indescribable relish to Mrs. Belmore's souvenirs of "Monte Christo," gave a little peal of laughter, and glanced up at Hartshorn, who lounged behind her chair.

"Do you know, Mr. Hartshorn, I almost think that I also have seen this book about the Prince. Is it not a rare coincidence?"

"Ah!" returned Hartshorn, imperturbably, focussing Mrs. Belmore across the arch of his patrician nose. "I believe," he said, with interrogation, "that you refer to a creation of M. Alexandre Dumas?"

"Is that so?" she answered pleasantly, picking at the tassel of her fan. "I thought only the King, you know, could create Counts and Princes and great people!"

For the first time in his existence Hartshorn stood unable to respond. His wit was paralyzed. Caprice turned her head, with a little light laugh behind her fan.

"Dear me! Such is life," said Mrs. Loftus Scaler, complacently. She scented danger and felt that she had not put her foot in as far as her friend.

The night of Mrs. Belmore's ball was the first of Gladys' return. An invitation awaited Mrs. Varian and her daughter at their cottage. Mrs. Varian looked through it. Then with a smile, "We will go, dearest," she said, caressingly.

Gladys sat before the silver-framed mirror of Venice

in her chamber. She had finished her toilette for the ball and dismissed her maid. She was alone with her thoughts, and she remembered the night ten months before, when she had fastened the white orchids of Gerard against her breast, and looked at her face in the mirror, glad of its beauty because it might make her dear to him. She rested her forehead on her arms and closed her eyes. It seemed to her that her life, from that moment, had become a dream, with the phases, the changes, the agony, and the phantasmagoria of a night vision, and that she was wakening again. The subtle odor of the orchids seemed to rise fresh, completing the illusion, and the little clock which had stood there unwound since the day of her leaving Newport last, struck out a swift light chime. The lonely sounding of the sea reached her; a peculiar intolerable impression of unrest and craving which it had struck upon her on the night when it had mixed with her mother's voice in telling her of Varian's ruin, came over her with keen recurrence. She touched a spring in her jewel-case of gold and steel inlaid on ivory, and a secret panel there slipped back and showed a sandal-wood box behind. From this she drew a withered stem of white orchid, pale and fragile; it reminded her that the night she had recalled was passed, like the flower's beauty. When she had laid it there her life seemed to die with its dying petals; now, as she held it with tenderness, a subtle impression of fear and hope touched her as if she had breathed a passing ethereal intoxicating vapor.

Her eyes met their reflection in the mirror, dark and burning under pale lids. Crushing her hands against her brows:

"Is it real?" she thought. "Is it I? Am I not

dreaming of his coming only to waken alone? I have done that and wished I had died in my sleep. . . . "

The door at the end of the long room opened, and Mrs. Varian passed toward her daughter, her little hands stretched out in eloquent expression of caress. "My Gladys, are you ready?" she said. The girl clung to her; a deep blush passing across her face.

"Dear little lady," she whispered, "I was thinking whether at last this could be real . . . ." She hid her quivering lips and throbbing brows on her mother's bosom. "I have waited so long—so long!"

Mrs. Belmore's ball was magnificent; a german was danced in which the favors were bracelets and scarf-pins; broad bands of dull gold on which, in enamel, were the ensigns of Monte Carlo and the United States, surmounted by the princely crest. These souvenirs were a supreme success; and the Idol of the Emeralds, resplendent in the unapproachable *parure*, received a thousand congratulations on her ingenuity and taste. These she accepted with as much enjoyment as if her brain had strictly deserved them, though she had considered the matter by deputy: viz., Archie Ambleon. The broker, overwhelmed with the entanglement of Empire City, had taken the bull by the horns, implored a private interview with his patroness, and laid the case before her. "Your influence," said Ambleon, "your power with your husband, could save me if you would. By the schemes of others I am innocently rendered more helpless than your little infant, and I have seen your tender and noble compassion, at least for him." He pitchforked these two things into his argument with adroitness if not subtlety: the Idol doubted her influence on her husband, and doted on her son. Mrs. Belmore's eyes filled with feeling tears; she picked at a button on her

dress till it came off, with pride and pleasant agitation. The *rôle* of patroness was her favorite part, and she played it with a relish.

"Of course Mr. Belmore could give you commissions which would be very valuable to you. Indeed he could set you up again entirely. Don't feel bad about it any more; I'll be sure to have him help you!"

With this she closed the interview (in an appropriate stately and softened manner), and Archie kissed her hand in humble homage. She usually spoke of Belmore as "Charlie," called Ambleon by his first name, and used a little slang (which takes in many minds the place of wit), but circumstances alter cases, and at present Archie saw his cue. Belmore had subsequently put him in working order, and he found himself again upon his feet in society and on the Street.

The return of Gladys and Mrs. Varian to their places in the comedy drama of the Newport season, signalized additionally the Belmore ball. Jesse B. Hartshorn appeared amongst the guests, accompanied by Gerard, one of the only men he never had at a disadvantage, and whom he therefore respected. Burrall Greme hung about with an evil expression on his face which gave it an added resemblance to the hungry visage of his father, and was joined by Belmont Van Blancken who had just left Caprice conversing in French with Monte Carlo, and who, though he liked Burrall none too well in his arrogant opulence, had a generous desire to render the social consequences of his financial collapse less obvious to him. Mrs. Loftus Scaler was endeavoring to join the French conversation, and was being at the same time briskly engaged in English by Mrs. Marston, who had gotten invited to the ball by accident, and had come across from Narragansett Pier. Mrs. Oriarte was flicking

her fan distressfully as she told Mrs. Varian of a change in Sydney's looks which made her fear she was not strong: and Sydney, leaning on the arm of Douglas Cariston, her husband, passed listlessly through the rose-laden rooms, where all the flowers seemed fading. Their marriage had taken place in the first days of the New Year. Van Steen, his face pale and livid, looked towards them from the shadow of the verandah, with an expression of exceeding weariness and craving. His life was bitter to him. Mrs. Belmore, attended by the subservient Ambleon, surveyed the scene in solid triumph.

Gladys was surrounded, and entertained those about her with a perfect grace which added to the charm of her beauty: she was making an engrossing effort to simulate ease and interest. Gerard had appeared once, without seeming aware of her presence, and had passed out again with a beautiful Venezuelan woman whose brilliant face, turning to his, was full of mingling coquetry and passion. Gladys had seen, and the warm white of her flesh grown a tint paler: her deep and luminous eyes glittered with a feverish light, she sustained her part with increasing life and fascination. She did not know that a little later he was alone, watching her from the broad verandah where the darkness covered him, and that her bitter comedy came near deceiving him. She wore no jewels but her clasp of fire-opals, and the butterfly of filagree poised in her hair. In the veiled lustre of thick satins, reflecting the light like the surface of a pearl, she appeared as she had done on the night he had left her the year before. But the animation, the ease, and self-oblivion of her manner made a difference which he marked. He was too far roused by the influence of her beauty to let this pass without knowing it either to be genuine or assumed;

and he entered the room and made his way towards her.

The consciousness of his approach came over her: his inexplicable magnetic influence upon her asserted itself. As their eyes met, the arbitrary power he had shocked through her like the torrent of an unnamed force. She returned his look with blinded eyes, and answered his greeting knowing that she did so, yet scarcely hearing what she said. Gerard was satisfied: he fell back amongst those with whom she had been speaking. He remained, saying nothing, but kept his regard upon her, and allowed the conversation to resume its course where he had interrupted it. Gladys did not comprehend his motive: she was not able to analyze his object, more than to distinguish the several elements of his latent passion for her; but she knew that he had at last come to her—to find her surrounded, forced to divide herself amongst others, and to give him no recognition but that, formal and limited, of slight acquaintance. He took no part in the conversation round her, and she, absorbed in her own engrossing feeling, had not sufficient nerve to attempt to draw him within the circle. She knew that she appeared to ignore him, and she suffered unsparingly. Persistently retaining her appearance of ease, of animation and of interest, she continued to converse, though his influence upon her was like the increasing heavy hold of a narcotic. He watched her: his dark eyes, of peculiar absorbent depth, seemed to draw from her the power of will, through some intangible connection. She was conscious of his regard upon her, though she did not dare to meet it; she felt a stifling sensation and a singular impression which almost made her fear, as if she and he were alone real in the scene, and the rest of those about her were feverish

dream-figures, mocking and vigilant, bent upon parting them from each other. Slight tense lines drew about her mouth with a peculiar effect, in her efforts to combat those ideas and retain control upon herself. A fine-drawn agony of the nerves was on her; her answers became almost mechanical: the pupils of her eyes grew large like those of an animal in pain. She made incredible efforts of self-control, but her entire being seemed unnerved, revolutionized, in revolt. Beside his influence, what was her will?

He divined all this: the self-dominance of his nature left him power to analyze the emotions of others; and his own habit of contempt for pain precluded compassion, a feeling he would have himself died sooner than evoked. Towards Gladys he felt an indescribable mingling of passion and curiosity; he admired the courage in her, and he studied with interest the powerful emotions whose traces she endeavored to suppress. Her beauty had for him a more intricate and stirring fascination than it possessed before; he was perpetually finding fresh aspects and expressions in it which intensified its charm. He was satisfied that her animation and ease had been masks assumed with conspicuous skill, and having made sure of this he amused himself by trying another effect.

A momentary pause occurred; he made some slight remark to her with a question. It was weightless, insignificant, but she looked towards him with a searching swift appealing glance as she answered. In meeting her regard he smiled; he had a peculiar smile, that touched across his face as light does across steel, keen, brilliant, and yet, lingering in his eyes, subtly caressing. The expression reassured her; she experienced a sudden relief, as if he had interpreted her thoughts and answered them; a new mental atmosphere

began to spread about her. With the cool skill which was one of his distinctive attributes, he went on with the subject he had introduced, and by degrees monopolized her attention and conversation without apparent effort to do so. As they spoke together, with the indefinable slight personal allusions which indicate the first growth of intimacy, Gladys felt one of those dream-like changes which can overtake the soul through another's influence; absorbing its night into the dawn.

A new dance had begun: they were left almost alone. She began to feel an ease and freedom with him she had never known before, tinged with his distinctive magnetic influence and rendered exquisitely refreshing by the contrast of her former pain. She gave herself up to the impression as one who has watched long and wearily gives himself to rest when sleep brings dreams of fruition.

"It is nearly a year since I left Newport," said Gerard. "I suppose a great many changes have occurred—you remember Goethe says no man ever leaves a room the same precisely as he entered it—but I feel as if I had taken up the course of my life where I left it then." His eyes rested on her face, where a faint color was rising; the lazy fire latent in them smouldering ready to leap up. "It is not often one can do that; one alters, the surroundings change, feelings modify or disappear;—but when the dominant influence is the same, increasing in strength rather than diminishing, and one returns, it resumes its hold."

He was speaking quietly in his ordinary way, his hand was at his lips with a gesture peculiar to him, and he deliberately watched her face. Gladys, by a swift reflection of memory, recalled the phrase he had used before he left her. It was the same. "Then I shall resume

the course of my life where it has been interrupted." With an impulse of joy so keen that it touched her like the edge of pain, she comprehended his meaning. The blood seemed to recoil to her heart, leaving her clasped hands cold and her face the pallid white of a lotos leaf. With a great effort which she sought to disguise, as he finished:

"I also have felt that," she said. She did not meet his eyes.

At the instant Mrs. Belmore approached, on the arm of the Prince of Monte Carlo. Gerard looked up, and comprehended the situation with amusement. Gladys also saw them, and experienced a terrible repulse. The moment passed. "My dear Miss Varian," said the Idol of the Emeralds with effusion, "I want to introduce my guest, the Prince of Monte Carlo. I am sure you remember that wonderful biography of his by Monsieur Alexandre Dumas."

Gladys acknowledged the illustrious presentation with a calm and grace which charmed Gerard; he enjoyed these disguises extremely: the Prince, a small mobile-faced man, regarded her with veiled admiration; he had seen her previously and sought the introduction with enthusiasm. Mrs. Belmore played with a great fan of ostrich plumes of canary color; these matched the blendings of her rich costume designed to enhance the emeralds.

The Prince made a speech of French construction in English, regarding the charm of his reception in America, and the brilliant hospitalities of Newport. While these phrases of eulogy flowed off his tongue, he was acknowledging with his eyes the beauty which had already attracted him. The hostess was charmed with his commendation. "So experienced, too; I should think he had seen everything, from what I remember

of the book," she thought. As he finished, and Gladys replied, Gerard met her eyes, and made a slight gesture of adieu. With this he turned away and approached the beautiful Venezuelan, who received him with jealous petulance, but presently resumed her usual brilliant smile, and became his partner in the waltz. Gladys, monopolized by Monte Carlo, resented this with a bitter impulse: the triumphant eyes of the foreign woman glanced towards her from his arms.

"He is cruel," she thought, passionately, the opals glistening with her deep-drawn breaths. "He must know that I am suffering. He is cruel!"

Poor Toller had been hanging about, at a distance from her, but always within view. He had watched, with a haunted, hungering look every action of hers and every phase of expression on her face. It was the first time he had ever seen her in contact with Gerard; and gradually, through the keen instincts of his passion, he arrived at a final conclusion. He was rendered certain at the moment she answered "I also have felt that," to Gerard. He experienced an increase of the dull pain of regret which never left hold upon him; and watched the episode of Monte Carlo with perceptions acutely quickened. His old fear and hatred of Gerard returned, mixed with the heat of jealousy: he distrusted him with the instant accurate intuition of a dog. Continuing to observe, he saw his cool slight gesture of farewell, the little comedy the beautiful Venezuelan played, and finally their reunion in the waltz. He saw Gladys' lips pale as she answered Monte Carlo, and the face of the triumphant coquette went past her in the dance. He felt a furious impulse of indignation.

"He's ath cruel ath a beast," he muttered, his

lips twitching with unmastered wrath. "And to her—! Ith he a man, or a devil?"

The poor fellow felt the pure sentiment of disinterested championship; and the idea of his own surpassing tenderness for her beside this irresponsive indifference roused in him a feeling of incalculable bitterness. As he stood, his eyes fixed on Gladys:

"Why, Wallace, how do you do?" said Miss Van Kleeck, with a pleasant smile, and her old frank friendly look into his face. She wore blue, some luminous light fabric which enhanced her blonde complexion and soft banged hair; her presence near him was unexpected and startled him abruptly. He attempted to suppress the traces of his dominant emotion, and responded with constraint; however, meeting her eyes again the accustomed atmosphere of confidence and sympathy asserted its influence. With a miserable glance of appeal he abandoned himself to her control.

"Ida, you're thuch a good girl, an' you've alwayth helped me 'long. I want to tell y' all about it. I'm ath unhappy ath a f'ler can be. Come on to the piazza."

In the conservatories dimly-shining lamps hung amongst the palms, in shades of ruby glass. The perfume of the flowers was rich with the added scent of tropic night-blooms; and the slender oleanders raised their crowns of odorous white or rose. Beside a seat concealed by a great tree-fern whose fronds spread high above it, Van Steen stood holding in his grasp the hand of Sydney, who had sank down there, and whose face was bowed on her bare white arm in an attitude of crushing pain. The strong lines of his face, as he watched her, were like the lines of a stone mask.

"Hugo, Hugo, it is more noble to endure. You would pity me if you knew all it costs me to say this, to you! Oh, you would pity me!" She raised her other hand timidly to his, without lifting up her head. Her voice was very weak, like that of one exhausted with long sickness. She repeated again, with an imploring, quiet, broken appeal: "Oh, you would pity me!"

Van Steen stood beside her as a man might stand by the deathbed of one beloved. His only response was to take into his strong hold the second trembling hand, and keep it there hard pressed between his own.

"Hugo," she said, "You know how I have learned to love you. Without you I have no hope or life, only blank hours and days of agony. And yet, I cannot—I cannot! I am bound to him; he trusts my truth and love; I am—his—wife."

"In the name of God, Sydney, do not speak of being his wife, you—to me!" muttered Van Steen, his face grey with mighty passion. "You do not know—"

She raised her eyes to his with a look of incalculable fear.

"Hugo, I suffer more than you. I had rather I had died. But it must be."

His shaking hands let fall her own. Their eyes met in the mutual anguish of a fathomless despair.

"What a success!" said Mrs. Loftus Scaler. "It is wonderful how a title takes. There's nothing like one anywhere, no matter what Washington thought about it."

"Oh yes," answered Mrs. Belmore, with effusion. "Of course, poor dear Washington was quite old fashioned; as they say, this is the Age of Progress; every one knows so much more now. I'm so obliged

to you, dear Mrs. Scaler, for suggesting that it was his biography ; it came so prettily when I introduced him ; those little things are *so* much use !"

It was long before the Prince of Monte Carlo released Gladys : he was an impressionable foreigner, and she fulfilled his ideal of charm. The white beauty of northern women is always adored by the dark and impetuous races of the south. During this time Gerard remained with the beautiful Venezuelan, whose eloquent and mobile *beauté-de-diable* seemed to richen and glow with the consciousness of triumph. Finally Gladys rose and prepared to take her leave. She was weary and grieved; his actions had stung her to haughty resentment and reserve. She regretted with keen bitterness her answer to him, which had implied so much ; and felt the languorous reaction of excitement and emotion coming over her. Passing towards her carriage, escorted by Monte Carlo, who had met his fate, she felt that kind of inert exhaustion which forces one to wish for sleep, partly as repose, partly as oblivion.

The ladies entered their carriage and were about to drive away. The Prince, in final ecstasy, was imploring permission to call upon them, and had just stepped back when a second figure advanced.

"Excuse me," said Gerard to Monte Carlo, with an accent of delicate hauteur. "I should have seen you to your carriage had I not been inconveniently detained," he continued. "May I ask permission to visit you soon, Mrs. Varian?"

"We shall be happy," she answered. Gladys leaned back on the cushions and was silent. The carriage drove rapidly away.

"Ah," thought Gerard, as he stood for a time on the piazza, looking at the summer stars. "A woman

who is capable of being at once angry and dignified, is a miracle. If she knew that she is one of those whom a man has to honor as he would his wife; while the other, pretty *diablesse*, could no more compel his respect than his mistress could!"

He turned, with a quiet smile, and went back to the brilliant Venezuelan. She entertained him. It is all a man has a right to hope for, I believe.

CHAPTER XIX.

GERARD.

ONE can best tell away his life, not by days or by years, but by phases. A fresh emotional phase came over Gladys and altered the aspect of the time. The day following the ball the events of the previous night recurred to her with intolerable vividness. The actions of Gerard, contradictory and inexplicable, disguised his dominant motive from her mind, and the uncertainty disquieted her strongly. The irreconcilable contrast of his words to her, and subsequent easy transfer of attention to the foreign beauty confused her. She could not comprehend, and she felt instinctively that he had blinded her. Gladys did not speak of her impressions to her mother; but a certain blinding cold anger and fierce unrest rose in her. She refused to accompany Mrs. Varian to Caprice's reception: she resolved that she would not again meet Gerard fortuitously until he had availed himself of the permission to visit them. She felt now a mental strain and disquiet which had never touched her in the city; the present near contact of her life with his infected her with a sense of pressing anxiety. Mrs. Varian's tact forbade her urging the girl to go with her, and Gladys remained in the cottage alone, listening to the restless sea. Her father had gone back to New York by the night boat: he had returned to the absorbing interests of personal speculation, and the firm of Varian & Golden were known as heavy opera-

tors, while keeping up their solid reputation as reliable and able brokers.

The casements of Gladys' room were open; she could hear the swell of the incoming tide. The clock on the mantel showed the passing of the minutes on its dial, and, on the silence of the windless afternoon crickets were chirping in the grass. There was something oppressive in the brilliant atmosphere through whose stillness the heat seemed to quiver—one heard the long vibrating call of a tree-locust swelling and fainting idly.

Gladys, in her restless mood, had been pacing the length of her apartment: she wore some white supple stuff of silk, with Camille de Rohan roses at her breast. She could not analyze the feelings which created her disquiet, but her controlling emotion was one of resentment.

"If he loves me," she thought, and as she thought a deep blush passed over her face like a reflection of the dark red roses, "He would respect me too much to leave me after saying what he did, and laugh with her—a coquette, one who would care equally for any other's attention, so long as it showed her power to attract . . . . " Gladys hesitated: her instinct told her this was true, yet she feared the thought might be the result of some unacknowledged feeling of jealousy, and jealousy was one of the few things which her tolerance passed by with disdain. "At least I cannot think he would—if he loves as I have done."

Her lids drooped; her face was very proud and cold. She felt that it had been a slight to her dignity, and a keen pain and disillusion touched her. Her own nature was delicately sensitive, and her love for him had engrossed her whole being. She felt a stinging shame

and revolt at the memory of the words she had spoken; how far had he valued them? The surroundings had become distasteful to her; she raised a large parasol bordered with deep lace and painted within with dancing butterflies, and left the room.

She passed down the shallow marble steps of the cottage into the gardens. A family of minute toads had become resident under the lowest stair of the wide flight; several squatted upon it, and began to hop nimbly here and there as the girl descended. One, bewildered, sat desperately in her path. Gladys saw, and stepped carefully aside. She always remembered to be generous.

She had spread her broad white parasol; and wandered through the gardens and aimlessly along the shore. The unnumbered insects of the grass and leaves made a vague light hum upon the air. Pervading the sense with its perpetual unrest, the sea was fretting on the rocks.

Gladys had hoped that Gerard would come that day. A mingled feeling prompted her; the feverish desire to ascertain his genuine attitude of mind towards her, and the contradictory wish to destroy the impression given him by her answer. As she walked along the edge of the gardens, watching the far waters where sunlight gleamed as if silver sea birds played there, she felt an indescribable weariness. She thought, "Why is it I can not be happy?"

A shadow fell silently across the turf as she went. The figure of Gerard stood beside her.

"I was told that you were in the garden," he said, as their greetings ended, and they walked on slowly through the new-mown grass. "Will you pardon me for coming to you here, instead of letting them interrupt you by announcing me formally?"

He divined that her pride had been offended by his actions at the ball, and this had given him an additional incentive to surprise her unprepared. He had come when she was weary of anxiety and of dissension, and found her wishing for the peace which it was alone in his power to give her. Her resentment had sunk away in the desire for rest; and his influence reasserted its hold upon her profoundly. She wished to retain the disguise of coldness, and she answered him with indifference: "I am glad you did so; I enjoy it here beside the sea."

"You find it more congenial here than in crowded reception rooms?" he answered. "Some women are unlike you. They find their strongest interest in seeing—and being seen."

She did not answer but walked on quietly; she felt that he alluded to the Venezuelan beauty. The fine deep lace of her parasol drifted between her profile and his eyes.

Gerard comprehended, and a slight smile passed across his lips. She had for him the irresistible charm of a thing yet half veiled and unexplored. Her vivid personal attraction increased, rendering the variable phases of her manner towards him full of interest; he watched her leisurely, enjoying her innocence, her delicacy, her indefinable and varying efforts to conceal from him the secret which he possessed already; the unnamed defences she set up against him; and finally the knowledge of how completely these innocent *finesses* dictated by her pride, would disappear when he declared himself, and removed the reason of their being. He had so long suppressed the impulse of deep feeling, that, though she had acquired a powerful influence upon him, it was rather the anticipative absorption of passion than the genuine tenderness of love. His

temperament and experience had combined to cultivate in him a general fastidiousness; he lingered through these phases of their intercourse, whose novel and peculiar charm was perfected by the certainty that he could at will terminate their elusive delays in final culmination. A thing forbidden him he would have sought to seize; that which he already found in his power he enjoyed through gradual and protracted phases, as a poet enjoys the subtleties of language, and an artist elusive nuances of color. Gerard went on.

"It is only women themselves completely natural who can enjoy the peace of nature. The women of fashion say they want *divertissement*—they mean the superficial and often vulgar diversion of display. The perfections of nature go by them; they see none of the innumerable phases of the changing seasons, or the aspects of the sea. They steep themselves in a routine of extravagance without genius or greatness; their hopes, their aims, their rivalries and their lives are slight and same. And when they are exhausted with the fever of this race, and have destroyed the capability of appreciating anything beyond it, they say that they are tired—*blasé*. They do not perceive that they are tired only of the insignificancies of life; that the might of Art is a closed book to them, and the extent of Nature unexplored and unrevealed."

Gladys' eyes were shining deeply; her lips trembled slightly with the breaths which passed between them. He had struck in her the chord he sought.

"It is true," she said, "It is only Nature and Art which are inexhaustible. In the calm of Nature one can almost forget pain. . . ."

"Have you ever suffered?" he said to her, quietly. His eyes met hers with their sudden subtle light;

with a shock she became conscious of the meaning that her words might bear. A blush like the touch of a burning hand upon her, rose uncontrollably. Impelled by an instinct of self-preservation, and yet paralyzed by sheer hot shame, "I was not speaking of myself . . ." she faltered. "There are many—who suffer."

"And there are very few," said Gerard with latent irony, "who feel compassion."

Gladys did not find words to go on; she had felt under the influence of his first speech a fresh trust in him, with sympathy and reassurance; her soul had found confidence and rest like a tired dove. The swift alarm and shame unnerved her, and dispelled those timid illusions which had gathered, through her hope, and through the soothing impression of his words, creating in her the idea that Gerard must feel at heart what he was saying. He had shaped in phrases thoughts of hers: and she forgot, in the sudden warmth of mutual sympathy, that latent fear which pervaded her love, and mixed with her reliance on him an intangible repulse.

They went on without speaking; the sea's sullen noise was like a comment on their silence. Some gulls flew low on the waters, flashing like silver; a sign of storm. A change was coming over the serene sky; stealthy vapors drifted from inland: a subtle shiver ran through the leaves of the trees and across the grasses.

Gerard quietly raised his hand to his lips, and spoke again.

"A man cannot help wondering," he said, with his habitual undemonstrative manner, "how a woman of your type can belong to the same humanity which produces—for instance, Signorina Carvallo."

Gladys paled imperceptibly: the memory of the

Venezuelan's exultant glance came over her with intolerable recurrence. Her voice was cold and even, as she met his look and answered him.

"I do not understand you," she said with calmness "I thought she was your friend."

There was a certain inflection of disdain and satire which stung Gerard in the last phrase.

"The friendships of society are as genuine and as reliable as the faces of masks," he answered. "It is different with you: your regard would be sincere. I did not know she had the honor of that."

His eyes lit with a masked flame, swiftly sinister and menacing. He had a latent fierceness inherited through the Spanish blood of his mother: he did not submit to control or rebuke.

"She is not my friend," said Gladys, simply. "Let us not speak of her."

The dignity of her aspect and reply compelled in him an impulse of respect, diminishing his sudden anger.

"I had no right!" he thought to himself. "And I would not have her be less proud."

His mentioning the beautiful Venezuelan was a freak of mingling curiosity and the instinctive cruelty which was a part of him. The result increased for him the fascination of Gladys: his humor changed.

They had not seen the signs of the storm, and the cloud-wrack sweeping up towards the sea. The trees shivered strangely at the first wind gust, and the sound of the leaves was like a thousand voices hoarse with dread. A single large rain drop fell on the roses at Gladys' breast and hung between their petals. She glanced up and saw the blackening sky. Turning to him with a fugitive swift look, "We must go back," she said.

They had reached a wilder part of the land where a

cliff rose sheer above the sea. The cottage was far behind them, and a wood of firs and pines rose tossing wild crests against the angry sky, and echoing the wind.

Gerard answered her look with his characteristic smile, and in a tone of animation, "Come," he said. They turned back and walked hurriedly: the storm was upon them.

The sky was heavy in grey and purple blending, and faint-colored vapors rolled in the van of the storm. The sea grew lividly smooth and lay waiting, glazing and paling in the lightning-sweeps. The wild harsh whispering of the trees, the rushing winds, the thunder that seemed to shake the skies, the hurrying clouds on which the jagged whip of the lightning shot forth and recoiled, excited a vivid emotion in Gerard, daring and passion mingled. The raging elements seemed to isolate him with the woman whom he loved: his passive mood merged itself into one of tense excitement.

"Are you afraid?" he asked her: the light in his eyes was keen and unrepressed; he was smiling with a fierceness of expression on his face like a reflection of the storm.

"I?" she answered, meeting his look, as the wind flung her heavy hair off the brows, showing their lines like those of a Greek head of Victory. "No; I have never been afraid. And this—I feel as if I was a part of it! I love it! It is sublime!" Her eyes shone; the wild soul of the storm seemed to pass into and transfigure her. Gerard, inspired and passionately roused by her beauty, seized her hands. "Gladys," he muttered, stifled with passion. "I love you! I love you! Will you be my wife?"

CHAPTER XX.

GLADYS.

"I know
"When life runs over, life is near to go."—SWINBURNE.

IT is an Italian legend that all the love-words which are spoken Eros transmutes into fireflies, fickle and exquisite, and they are immortal.

On the sea, peaceful after storm, the light of the moon caught pale sparks and misty flashes; fireflies flitted through the gardens, and hovered above the oleanders on the marble entrance-steps.

Slowly passing the wide piazza's length, Gladys leaned on the arm of Gerard. The moonlight touched her face, and showed on the calm brows an unfathomable peace. In the eyes of Gerard there was a glittering triumph: he had reached the turning point before he calculated, but the assurance of success exhilarated him. The gust of passion which had seized him in the storm had been a mighty and unconquerable impulse; the memory of its strength remained, infusing a keen retrospective excitement through his subsequent subsiding emotions. The phases and complications of a less controlling emotion did not touch the supreme calm bliss of Gladys. She loved and was at last beloved, and her life seemed full of immortal beauty as a lark's throat is full of song at dawn. She did not reason or reflect: the sense of his presence and of his acknowledged love surrounded her; it was enough.

They had passed the length of the piazza twice in silence; the speech of the wind and the sea were sweet

to her lulled senses, and the serene night sky answered the calm of her soul with its great calm. Gerard was reviewing with retrospective satisfaction the past which he recalled. He felt his complete dominion over her with a fine sense of exultation; the idea recurred to him with subtle irony that his life had the power to control her pure existence as the moon draws the tides.

"Gladys," he said. Her eyes met his with full and eloquent response. She no longer repressed herself, and the exquisite happiness she felt reflected itself in her luminous smile.

"Why did you pass me without recognition on the last day of the Old Year?" he asked her. "You were not angered with me."

A soft blush crept over her throat, where she had fastened some pale Niphetos roses. She did not meet his eyes.

"Tell me," he said, touching her hand as it lay within his arm, and watching her with his slight smile. She trembled a little at his touch, and her head drooped. Then, raising her appealing eyes, with a pathetic expression of trust: "I loved you," she answered. "And I was very sad. It seemed as if you were so far away, and we should never meet again. . . . I did not know—I thought you did not love me, Gloster." Her eyelids dropped.

"I have always loved you," said Gerard, with passion, "I need not say that to you now." His eyes gleamed with a fierce light, and he crushed her in a hot embrace in the shadow of a column.

The wind and the sea were at rest, and the fireflies drifted amongst the flowers; the moon hung above the waters like a shield of gold. Gladys' hands lay in those of Gerard; they were taking leave of each other.

"Do you remember the night you went away, Glos-

ter?" she said, with hesitation. "The light fell on your face as we said good-bye. I shall never forget it. I thought of it, because now—we do not part like that. I did not ever think I should be so happy. . . . " she ceased. Her delicate reserve, the consequence of peculiar sensibility, repressed the impulse to reveal these suggestions of her love, whose trust impelled her to confide in him. Gerard's eyes burned upon hers, as the jasmine shadows played across her throat.

"God! what fidelity!" he thought. "I wonder what man was ever worthy of such a love, or could repay it? We think we love, but beside the spirituality of this, our love is grossness. . . . " His eyes averted themselves from the shining depth of hers, like the moonlit seas. He felt a sort of sudden shame.

"I hope you will always be as happy as you are now, Gladys," he said, in a suppressed voice. "Women like you are amongst the happiest, and the saddest, who live. I hope I may never make you suffer." He spoke without meeting her eyes; an indefinable feeling prompted him to say this; the purity of her influence was upon him, and the knowledge of his own unworthiness.

She smiled; her old luminous smile made perfect by the new light in her heart. "Ah, no," she answered, with incalculable tenderness. "You will never make me suffer, for you will love me as I love you."

"Yes, I love you," he answered; the fervent assurances of passion seemed to his mood a kind of irony; "If I were another than myself I might swear that our love would be eternal like those everlasting stars. A man is very happy when he can forget that everything passes away." His eyes met hers again. "Let that go!" he exclaimed, regaining his habitual manner. "Sometimes one destroys happiness by presum-

ing to analyze it, when he should only enjoy. . . . Give me one of your roses; they are white, like you, and I shall think as I kiss it, that you are still near me."

She obeyed him with an indefinable sadness, which touched her vaguely, like a mist from the sea. As she drew a rose from those drooping at her breast, his eyes were on her with their keen and sudden light. He thought, with a fierce impulse of passion, as he had on the night of the Newport ball, "She is beautiful!—beautiful!"

"Keep it," she said, with wistfulness, "I can give you other roses, but never again that one which I have worn to-night. . . " She felt that the dawning hour of her life's fulfillment had come with the blooming of the rose.

Gerard took it from her and pressed his hot lips on its leaves. As he touched the petals they loosened and dropped in a pale drift on the floor of the piazza. He held in his hand the ruined stem.

A subtle impulse moved them both. They looked at the fallen rose leaves silently. Then she laid her hands upon his arm and clung to him, shivering in the summer air.

"Gloster, I am afraid!"

He held her against his breast and kissed the softness of her hair. He said: "Can you fear when I am with you? when I hold you here? I shall be with you in the future, and I love you. Do you fear the future now?"

He had touched in her the great and deep chord of her soul; she raised her face and met his eyes.

"I will think only of that," she answered. "You love me, and that is all my life. But oh, adored one, if your love failed me then, I should die as that rose has done. . . ."

He kissed her pale lips and her supplicating eyes.

"I love you—I love you!" he said. "Do not think of the future; love makes all time the present."

Later Gladys was seated before the sheet of the Venetian glass. The fading Niphetos roses lay near her, exhaling a soft and lingering perfume. The casements were open and the night wind, warm and sea-smelling, drifted in. Gladys' hair was loosened in a shining web on her shoulders; she had laid off her soft silk gown, and the curves of her arms and throat showed like moulded marble. It was not long before Mrs. Varian entered and came towards her daughter.

Bending over her and touching lightly the falling radiance of her hair, "My darling," she said, with surpassing tenderness, "I am so happy for you!"

Gladys turned on her a wistful glance, full of appeal. Meeting with her own responsive touch the hand which caressed her hair.

"Dear little lady!" she said, "I also am happy, and yet sad. Sit here, and let me lay my head upon your lap. I cannot help my feeling and you will understand. . . ."

She paused; one of those vague and lingering chills of the soul had touched her which are sometimes omens rather than fancies; she craved the warmth of sympathy and comprehension which her mother could give. Mrs. Varian allowed her to seat herself at her feet and rest her arm upon her knees; and then, drawing towards her a strand of Gladys' loosened hair:

"Tell me," she said, with tenderness.

"It is so little when I tell it," Gladys answered. "But it seemed so much to me. Perhaps you will feel that I am too sensitive,—and yet, it is because I still cannot realize fully that all I hoped—"

"Dearest," said Mrs. Varian. "Great love teaches infinite comprehension, and you know how greatly I

love you. I understand. Do not think that I could misinterpret you." She took in her own the hands of Gladys, and their eyes met in a long look.

"I gave him one of my roses; it was precious to me in memory of the first day of our life together. It seemed as if I could arrest some part of those hours in it, although they passed—I do not know,—I cannot describe my thought. He kissed it as he took it from me, and its leaves fell under his lips in a shower to the ground."

There was silence; the night wind passed with a long vibrating cry like the sound of a voice in pain. Mrs. Varian bent over Gladys, and tenderly kissed her forehead. "Do not think of it again," she said. "You have suffered so long that now happiness has come you fear everything which could suggest its passing. Time will lessen that sense of insecurity and prove to you, dearest, your lasting joy. What is a dream like this beside the knowledge that he loves you and that you will be his wife?"

Gladys bowed her face upon her mother's lap and pressed her hands.

"When I think, I know that it is so. You have comforted me, and I will forget it as you say. When I remember his love, I am unspeakably happy—I only feared that he should cease to love me, and then my life would be like the rose that fell away and is withered there. But I will always pray God I may never know that; and God is kind."

She raised her face, and her eyes had a grand light in them: the radiance of faith. The mirror reflected her, with the visionary glory on her brows, as she met her mother's look; and the calm of her innocent trust returned, seeming to shine upon her.

The roses had faded where they lay.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CIRCLED SNAKE.

And now, when joys are born less subtly keen,
Rises a mirage of the might-have-been;
When love was life, and life was crossed by Fate. . . .

TIME passed: the news of Gladys' engagement had been made public, and Beeckman Gerard came on to Newport from New York. The Prince of Monte Carlo, deeply chagrined, cut short his visit and returned to Europe. However, his loss was repaired by the coming of the Baronne de Rangars, a former belle, and widow of a celebrated Crœsus of the Bourse. This was in fact the woman who, ten years before, had broken her engagement with Gerard, and who returned, still young and in the zenith of her beauty, to the scene of her early supremacy.

"Did you know the Prince?" asked Mrs. Belmore, to whom she was related. "Such a loss to Newport! He went off, as the dear witty Viscount used to say, like a puff of smoke. One of our pretty girls made him forget all about that poor dear creature he had to leave on their wedding day—his biography gives such a touching account—and when he heard of her engagement to Gloster Gerard he turned the color of lightning, and went off next day without any p. p. c's."

Mrs. Belmore was engaged in picking at some ribbon ends, and did not observe the sudden change in the color of her hearer's brilliant face. Expressions of surprise, mortification and anger, passed across it,

culminating in a final blaze of vengeful light from her superb black eyes. However, she suppressed herself. She was in the second year of her widowhood when Gerard reached Paris. Hazard had thrown them together, and he, prompted by surviving invincible rancour regarding her early treachery to him, had produced in her the idea that he recalled the past with tenderness, and that her influence upon him still retained its supremacy. Her vanity, the most poignant sensibility and dominant trait in her character, flattered and soothed, encouraged the chimera. She imagined that it was on her account that he had remained unmarried, and observed acutely that ten years was a comparative eternity of constancy. On the pretext of revisiting some relatives she gravitated towards Newport at the opening of the season. This was the fruition of her hopes; and she was not accustomed to Dead Sea fruit.

Beeckman Gerard, some years his brother's senior, had known nothing of Gladys previous to her engagement. He was presented to her on his arrival, and spoke of her to his brother later on with some earnestness. He was a man whose admiration of woman had not increased with his experience of life, but who, at the same time, avoided the ironical egotism of Gerard. His knowledge of life in many phases had not decreased his respect for abstract virtues and ideal perfections; he allowed the possibility of their existence without special belief in their probable abundance. His mind was large and his views tolerant. He practised the philosophy of present enjoyment, but was capable of vivid sympathy. A peculiar resemblance and dissimilarity, combined, existed between the brothers; this extended to their dispositions, and rendered each distinct.

"I did not know you had this thing in view," said Beeckman Gerard reflectively, as he left the Varian cottage where they had passed the evening. "I did not think it probable, considering your general principles. For her sake I hope it is something more than a casual idea. A man, provided he is wealthy, can lead about the same life after marriage as before, if he tires of his wife; you see plenty who do so. But it is another affair with a woman. She has three alternatives: society, retirement, and a divorce-suit. The common run take to one or the other, but some women don't find either of these satisfying; your *fiancée* is one of them. With her it would be a matter of something more, something indefinable, but which includes her hopes, her ideals, her soul, all of which she concentrates on the man she loves. If you act without deliberation, you will feel a certain amount of regret in the future; for I judge a man can't hurt a creature which places faith in him without a sort of compunction. You know, you have had your freedom all your life, and used it; any restraint will gall you. You will visit it on her—a man never can see himself as the cause of his own disasters. The first inharmonious incident will destroy the charm she feels, and then—. Well; my observations have shown me that the majority of women lack sensibility to a larger degree than is usually supposed, while a small fine-strung minority possess a superabundance of it. Your future wife is one of these. To avenge on her your own passion and fickleness would be a brutal thing; and yet you could not escape doing it. The fact would be sufficient; she would divine the alteration in you, the absence of that intense responsive magnetism which connects you now; and her universe would become devastated and barren; nothing could restore

the charm. It would be as bitter as death to her, and more hopeless; such women reach sublimities of folly. You hear me, Gloster: I only want to put before you the chances, which you may not have considered. I know most women are either fools or fiends, but there are some who strike the higher level. And I think it is as cowardly to hurt one of those as it would be to strike your dog when he looks up trusting into your face."

"I understand you," answered Gerard. He did not say more than this.

Gerard felt a certain latent irritation with his brother regarding the words he had spoken. He was sufficiently cool to analyze his sentiments and motives; to recognize a keen truth in the statement, which excited resentment in him. The ideas brought before him with verbal distinctness were covertly familiar; he was at once defiant of and shamed by them; and felt an unusually poignant impatience at the knowledge that his brother had gauged the possibilities with accuracy. At the same time his passion was strong and unsated: provisional and unacknowledged scruples came too late to weigh with him. Beeckman Gerard did not refer to the subject a second time. He had penetration equal to his brother's, and discerned that his words were at once unwelcome and ineffectual.

Toller first heard of Gladys' engagement to Gerard through Miss Van Kleeck. He had told her the story of his unhappy passion, and from the night of Mrs. Belmore's ball he fell into his old confidential attitude towards her. On receiving the intelligence herself, she determined to be the first to inform him, and did so with tact and compassion.

"Well, p'r'aps ith best," said Wallace Toller, quietly, staring before him. "I th'pose she loved him,

Ith hard to be a f'ler like me, though, Ida, an' know that you're made all wrong from the start."

He did not say more than this; but the old dull look of hopelessness fell across his face like a deepening shadow.

It was a brilliant season at Newport; the presence of Mme. de Rangars revived society from the comparative collapse caused by Monte Carlo's erratic exit. Mrs. Loftus Scaler gave a dinner, introducing a new *chef* to the fashionable world, and in consideration of this obtained his services gratis for the season; Viscount Crooker and his wife passed through Newport on their way to the Adirondacks, and received an enthusiastic welcome from Mrs. Belmore; this amused the Viscountess, who had formerly been known as "the girl with green eyes." She decided that the humor of life lay in its contrasts. Mrs. Marston had just become a widow; and it was reported found herself free of two million dollars. Letters of condolence reached her from the leaders of that circle she had stormed but never entered; she found at last that her battle had terminated in victory. Archie Ambleon became engaged to a dowered cousin of his opulent patroness, and having arranged this alliance successfully, felt himself permanently secure. Caprice exchanged a few words with Hartshorn.

"Everywhere one sees Progress," she said.

Gladys was supremely happy. Time was passing towards her marriage day: and the events and incidents which marked it were imbued with the penetrating influence of her joy. When a woman's life fills with passionate happiness, the lightest passing impressions become pervaded with the prevailing mental atmosphere. Existence is idealized.

Gerard desired to reassure her; to obtain her con-

fidence completely. He treated her with peculiar delicacy and tenderness, concealing his own ironical humor, which jarred on her indefinably. She felt the restful change with a sense of completed content; it seemed to be the final perfection of her transformed existence. She had forgotten to think that this might pass away.

The timid instinct of reliance and appeal, fed with his constant delicate response, developed itself; her need of his sympathy became merged in the happiness of its possession. No longer startled and vaguely wounded by his quiet and ironical comments, she turned to him continually with caressing confidence, revealing her thoughts as they rose and passed. He obtained an intimate comprehension of her mind and heart; and felt, in following the fugitive phases of her feeling and the fresh purity of her ideas, a sensation like that of one who uncurls the leaves of a rosebud and presses his lips and nostrils against its cool tissues, inhaling eagerly their perfume. He had keenly enjoyed the time of her reticence and effort at disguise, and watched the delicate approaches of her increasing confidence with a peculiar impression. He wished, with some bitterness, that her influence could re-ignite the past fires of his early passion: he comprehended that with this spontaneous unreflecting glow of feeling, quenched at its height, had passed his capability for genuine emotion.

Self-cognizant with the accurate mental diagnosis of an habitual analyst, Gerard knew the unstable fabric of his passion, and admitted the probability of its decline. He admitted the fact of a future possible vast injustice done to Gladys, in a breath with wishing that her innocent charm could create in him a deep-seated devotion. He recognized the irony of his having

squandered his purest feelings on a jilt, and of his inability to offer to the woman worthy of it an abiding love. However, beyond an intermittent regret for the absorption and enchantment of that past emotion, he dismissed the train of thought arbitrarily, but endeavored to mix with the keen force of his passion a softer element of her caressing influence. It was an unacknowledged effort to revive the pure and ardent feelings he had left behind him with his boyhood. *Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?*

Gladys' marriage day was set in September, at the close of the Newport season. Mrs. Varian was selecting a superb *trousseau*, in which, habitually indifferent to dress, Gladys felt an indescribable new interest. Every article added to it reminded her of her happiness; the radiant youth which had passed from her eyes and smile in the frozen months of the winter returned; she pretended a bewitching coquetry in examining the lace and fabrics. Throwing over her hair a scarf of supple Eastern silk, she would turn from the mirror laughing. "Is it pretty, dear little lady? Do you think it is?" And then with eyes at once serious and sweetly arch, "And will he think it is?"

For these questions Mrs. Varian had one response.

"You are becoming a child!" she would say, covering the young girl's face with happy caresses.

When Gerard had offered Gladys a betrothal ring of diamonds, she said with hesitation:

"I have a little fancy, Gloster; I wish for a ring like the old symbol of eternity, the snake. You will not be angry with me, if I should love that better than the diamonds? It is a pledge of our love, and the circled snake means 'Forever.'"

She had raised her eyes to his and touched his hand. His regard met hers, full of deep fire.

'We do not need that!" he said.

The ring was made in heavy gold, and the single word engraved within it. Gerard put it on her hand, speaking slowly.

"It will replace the fallen rose."

Her eyes lifted, with a shadow of fear, and met his smile. The expression of misgiving faded like mist before the morning sun.

CHAPTER XXII.

NIGHT SCENES AND DAWN.

GERARD had given a farewell dinner to his bachelor friends and was leaving Delmonico's. Another party, who had also supped in a private room, were descending the staircase: they were laughing loudly, and surrounded a woman whose dress, a bold combination of Indian red with shades of orange and canary, threw up her dark eyes and hair. She was laughing also in an insincere light voice, and regarding with a glance of audacious challenge the man who was nearest her. Gerard looked towards them as he passed out with his brother: at the instant she saw him and caught the glance full. A new animation flashed into her eyes.

"I've seen that fellow before," she exclaimed. "Who is he?"

"Gloster Gerard," said her companion. "He's giving a farewell bachelor dinner here to-night. I didn't attend, as I'm a married man, but I enjoyed my evening all the same!"

Celestine Lovelight forgot to join him in the laugh he pointed his words with.

"He'll be as badly off as you before long, then," she said, her blunt lips setting involuntarily. "Who's the girl?"

"I can't see why you want to know: you're not very likely to make her acquaintance—" he paused, laughing stupidly: she had suddenly turned on him, whitening with passion, her hands clenched.

"See here, you had better look out," she said. "Tell me her name!"

She fixed her eyes upon him. The bully did not like the stormy rage in her face and sullenly answered:

"Gladys Varian."

"All right," she said. "It's nothing to me, but you'd better keep your wit to yourself next time." She twisted her fan of primrose-tinted ostrich plumes between her hands. The sticks of mother-o'-pearl snapped across.

"There's a hundred dollars gone," said her companion. She looked at him coolly.

"You can give me another at two hundred then," she answered. Her color had risen but her lips remained white, producing a peculiar effect.

Edward Golden was passing Delmonico's as Gerard and his brother left it. He had been to visit Stone who was dying of pneumonia, and was walking fast to make his blood flow warm; he felt chilled through. By one of the arbitrary coincidences of life he passed Gerard without being aware of his identity, and struck across to Madison Square with the keen night wind in his face. Golden had thought, when the prospect of large wealth opened before the partners, to ask Varian for Gladys' hand when she returned from Newport. He had centred his hopes on this idea, and allowed the thought of a home in which she should be the companion of his mind and heart to make itself intimately dear to him. The contrast of this possibility with his previous life of solitary effort rendered his hope more poignant and engrossing. Varian did not suspect his partner's feelings when he asked him heartily for his congratulations and announced the engagement of Gladys to Gerard. Golden responded with courageous self-repression, but the blow told heavily upon him. He had helped to nurse poor Stone during his few days' illness, and to reassure his friend's young wife. To-night,

after watching by his bed some hours, he heard from the physician that the end had come. Golden broke the truth to Stone's wife with grave and deep compassion, took his friend's hand in his for the last time, and left them. The touch of the enfeebled hand had struck through him a pervading chill. He still heard the poor young girl's heart-broken speech imploring her husband to look up and say farewell to her and to his little child. Stone's faculties were already stupified; the words went by him without meaning.

Golden, though engrossed with the thought of his dying friend had been unable to dismiss the subordinate consciousness of his own loss. He was at that age when a man feels more genuinely and regrets with more abiding bitterness than in first youth, when he has before him the limitless horizon of illusion and of hope. He could not rid himself of the thought that it was the eve of Gladys' marriage-day. A chilling impression of loneliness was on him: he had lost his supreme hope and his friend. The leaves were turning gold, and some had fallen in the restless night wind's sweep. The electric lights shining high above the trees cast long misty rays down from their nucleus; leaf shadows fell on the paths of stone where the fallen leaves were fading. Golden went on towards his apartments alone; he was heavy-hearted. At the same time the thought of the young widow's agony struck him with deep rebuke. His large nature, full of humanity, felt shame at recalling his own less universal sorrow in the presence of her desolation.

"Poor girl! poor girl!" he thought, his eyes on the stones of the street as he went. "I am strong, and should know how to face it, but she is so young and so untried."

It is always thus that the generous efface themselves in contemplating the pain of other souls.

Gladys awoke to find her mother watching her with wistful tenderness. It was the morning of her wedding day. She stretched her arms towards that figure, so familiar to her and so dear.

"Beloved little lady," she cried, "can it be that I am leaving you?"

She looked around the room hung with silks of rose and gold, and clung to her mother's caressing hands with an indescribable emotion. She saw for the last time the accustomed surroundings of her happy girlhood which was passing away. A sense of unreality swept over her.

Mrs. Varian knelt at the bedside; her eyes were shining with unfallen tears. "My Gladys," she answered, using the accustomed caressing phrase with infinite and lingering tenderness. "Do not feel sad. My love is always near you, and you will have also the love of your husband, dearest to you in the world. I feel that I am resigning you, but it is to him, and you are happy . . . Therefore I feel only happiness in letting you leave me. Ah, my child! my child! if I weep it is because you have been so dear to me; there is no one who can fill your place. But I am grieving you—my darling—on the morning of your wedding day. Look how fair the sky is; I waked before dawn and watched the sunrise, and there has not been a cloud. Dearest, I wish your life to come may be like that serene daybreak."

She smiled, pressing the girl's hands to her bosom. Gladys, seeking to reply, broke down, and they wept together quietly. These were refreshing tears which

relieved their hearts and softened their regrets with hope.

The world of fashion poured into the Catholic Cathedral uptown in waves of contrasting color and rich fabrics. Mrs. Belmore entered with Mrs. Loftus Scaler, and they seated themselves together. Mme. de Rangars, in a superb toilette, occupied a conspicuous position. She was determined that Gerard should miss the satisfaction of reprisal. The calm of the place, which seems to pervade it diffusing from its many shrines, was dispersed by the indefinable whispering fret of the sea within it, though the quiet glory of the broad south windows fell soft and solemn on the altar. Van Blancken and his wife were there; and Miss Van Kleeck appeared in exquisite blending of dove-grey velvet and faint rose. Her lively face was a little pale, and a shadow of passing sadness was expressed there as if some memory had risen before her. Caprice, with her sweet fickle smile, raised her eyes to Van Blancken's face, and murmured a single phrase:

"Do you remember?"

Gladys, with her father and mother, was rapidly approaching the white pile of the Cathedral.

"Let me kiss you once again," said Mrs. Varian, "dearest."

Gladys bent towards her with a caressing gesture and spoke quietly.

"Do not be lonely, mother."

"No—no," answered Mrs. Varian. She attempted to repress herself but two tears fell on the bouquet of white orchids in Gladys' lap and hung amongst the flowers. The young girl felt the parting profoundly, and wished to render it less hard.

"Dear little lady," she said, "Do not grieve, for I shall have no happiness if my wedding-dress is splashed with tears?"

Mrs. Varian's generous instincts of self-oblivion responded to this.

"Do not be afraid, dearest," she answered with a brave smile. "It is nothing."

The carriage stopped; they had reached the Cathedral. Tom Varian, who felt that it was best not to interfere between women at a crisis, had remained silent until then. Now he took his wife's hand in his, speaking cheerily.

"She shall not be lonely, Gladys: I will see to it," he said with confidence. Then his own deep feeling appeared: he kissed his daughter on her brows and cheek: "God bless you, little one!" he exclaimed, his strong voice trembling.

"Poor dear Monte Carlo!" sighed Mrs. Belmore to Mrs. Loftus Scaler. "No wonder he went off in a melancholy rage: such a lovely girl, and to be made away with under his nose by a simple Mr.!"

Mrs. Scaler's principles were Democratic, but she did not wish to commit herself. "Quite a trial; but then such is life," she replied, smiling astutely.

Gladys was approaching the altar where Gerard awaited her. She was very pale, and her wedding dress, filmed over with fine old Mechlin lace, produced an incredibly soft effect. The splendid marriage-music of the Catholic Church accompanied her like a benediction, and a thousand eyes were on her. Sydney Cariston thought with quiet exceeding suffering of her own ruined life.

Gerard watched her come with an impulse of rising passion repressed and glittering in his regard. As she

advanced she raised her drooped lids and their eyes met in a long look . . . .

The solemn and magnificent ritual was concluded: she had become his wife. The tide of Fashion ebbed fast from the Cathedral, and left it to resume that mighty calm which had soothed her on the last day of the Old Year.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AT THE HOUSE OF SALLIE JEWEL.

SOCIETY was returning to New York. The last leaves of autumn had fallen. "Well," said Mrs. Belmore, with some penetration, "I think it will be just a little awkward, though of course she is so much the rage in London, and it's quite a novel idea. You see it was through him she first was heard of, and he got the worst of the suit. So he'll feel dreadfully, dreadfully mad to see her success here and know he caused it, so to speak."

This long logical demonstration was a strain on Mrs. Belmore; she forgot to pick at her ribbon ends and looked at Mrs. Loftus Scaler.

"Annoying!" answered the latter, restively. "She arrives on Saturday next, and I can't see why Viscount Crooker should object. His wife might, now, if you like: she was much the same grade of person before he took her up, and would not care for the reminder."

"Oh, but now that she's Viscountess Crooker, it's so different. I received them at dinner with the Prince of Monte Carlo, when they passed through Newport in the summer!"

"Well, Mrs. Belmore, such is life. I can't see why we should welcome a disguised pig-pickler's daughter, and cut a professional beauty because she was a chorus-girl before she obtained her present reputation. I'll introduce her myself if necessary to show what position can do if it wants to."

Mrs. Belmore plaited the silk of her superb carriage dress, and pinched the plaits, with agitation. Mrs. Loftus Scaler was always fully roused when she fell back on her hard-won social laurels.

"You see, the Viscount will be here about that time. Of course we must pay him attention. And then, how dreadfully troublesome not to be able to ask them to meet each other! It wouldn't be possible, you know, because a breach-of-promise suit is such a delicate matter. It sounds like an item in your hotel-bill, 'so much for cracking the mantel-glass,' but it isn't exactly, all the same, even though you pay cash down. Don't you think it might be awkward?" she pursued, "You know, any other time would be quite different, and it would be fun to encourage her as we do our young authors and artists sometimes; but though she is the rage just now it may not last, while of course his title is entailed."

"I always believe in business-like prudence myself," answered Mrs. Loftus Scaler, "but I have my opinions about this matter and shall act upon them in due time." She leaned back against the carriage cushions with an imposing and conclusive air.

"Of course," said Mrs. Belmore upon this, "it's quite charming to *chaperone* a girl like that, who has been distinguished at Court, and so on. I have never done so myself, but you have had several *protegées* of that sort before, so you must be quite able to judge."

Mrs. Loftus Scaler was silent but covertly turned her opaque shrewd eye on her with malice.

At the moment Toller's dog-cart spun by; he was driving Miss Van Kleeck. Under her familiar and healthy influence he began to regain his natural tone of mind, and no longer felt the despondency which had overhung him in the year gone past. His love for

Gladys had become a memory; but a noble one, with empire over his purest feelings. In recalling her he was inspired with an indefinable ideal emotion. He felt that contact with her personality had elevated his own.

Celestine Lovelight passed them in a victoria with Sallie Jewel. Her cream-colored steppers were replaced by black imported mares of the Ukraine breed; she had deliberated seriously on securing a team of zebras, but incurred the caustic ironies of Sallie, which arrested her enterprise.

"If the papers talk about *her*," said Celestine, venomously, "it shows what one should expect. I'll go home to London with the Bijou company next spring, elope with a lord and then come back, and they'll talk about me. There's just as much reason for it!"

Sallie Jewel fixed her narrow eyes upon her, glittering like steel, and smiled.

"My friend, you are a little jealous, when you have no need to be. It is an affair of fashion, and comes to literally the same thing in the end. If you, instead of pillaging Wallace Toller, had acted a little off the stage; posed innocently in public; compromised him instead of yourself; and finally demanded a solid recompense for a hypothetical injury, you would now perhaps be sufficiently celebrated to star alone, and become the fashion. You would also, for example, be able to cut me. That would be significant."

Celestine bit her lips and was silent. She knew that in this humor Sallie Jewel was beyond her diplomatic powers.

They passed Gladys driving with Gerard. Celestine started; the profile of her former mistress was turned from her but she met Gerard's look full. A brilliant

color flushed her face; she felt it, and an impulse of defiance seized her, expressing itself in her eyes.

The vehicles passed each other swiftly.

"I have seen her face before," thought Gerard, "she is one of those who do not always blush."

He turned down Fifth avenue later; the afternoon drive was terminating. The setting sun, reddening the clear West, threw a soft glow over the city. Ahead stretched a vague perspective valley away to Madison Square; in this direction were passing all the equipages which had filled the drives of Central Park. The day was past, and the city's life was pressing towards the diversions of the night.

"They never seem to rest," said Gladys. "They are always reaching for something different, something new. Do you feel like that, Gloster? I am always leaving hours behind me that I enjoy, and wishing that time went slower. Even Time seems to hurry here."

Gerard smiled.

"You must be very happy," he answered. "Very few think their present is good; they speculate on what the future may be."

"But I have reached my future now—?" she said, looking up with naïve questioning. He met her clear eyes and laughed a little, kindly. He was touched by the innocent thought.

Gerard's house was one of those on the uptown portion of Fifth avenue, where the architecture becomes more varied and massive than in the older part, and the interiors show a richness and originality which renders each individual. Passing weather-doors of heavy carved wood, and inner doors with lace-veiled plate-glass panels, Gerard and Gladys felt the softly heated atmosphere of the house upon their faces. She

passed up the wide staircase languidly; the change from the keen air outside produces an immediate sense of fatigue. Entering her large apartment hung with lapis lazuli blue and gold, Gladys threw off the sable wraps she wore and said with hesitation, "I am going to Caprice's reception to-night. Do you care to come with me, Gloster?"

"I?" he answered. "Well, I will see you there, and then go into the Union. You don't want me to remain, do you?"

Gladys turned from the mirror and smiled to him.

"No; do what pleases you, and I am pleased."

Gerard appreciated her graceful and winning acquiescence, and smiled as he came towards her. "You make me wish to remain, *ma belle*," he answered, kissing her warm white throat. The old Venetian mirror, a gift of Mrs. Varian to her daughter, reflected between its silver frames another passing picture.

While Gladys was making her toilette for the dance, Beeckman Gerard arrived. His brother met him in the grand reception-room, where a few lamps with tinted shades were lighted.

"Well, old fellow," said Beeckman, shaking hands, "How are you going to spend the evening?"

"I am going to see Gladys to Mrs. Van Blancken's," answered Gerard, leaning his elbow on the mantel. "And then I suppose I shall drop into the Union and hear what is going on. Are you coming with me?"

"Well, no; I believe I shall be at the dance. I have an invitation, and as you are not going with Gladys, I will be her escort. She may feel lonely if she has no one with her; in any case she will miss you."

Gerard felt a sudden inward irritation.

"She need not go if she feels that," he said. His brother rejoined immediately.

"You are wrong; it is I who say it, not she."

At that moment Gladys pushed back the portière, and entered, drawing on a long white glove. The expressions of the two men's faces were peculiar; a sort of petulance drew Gerard's finely-marked black brows together, and gave a quick light to his eyes; but his brother's heavier features had taken on a dull pallor; he pressed his lips together, and his regard, before he turned towards Gladys, rested on her husband sombrely repressed.

"Is it you, Beeckman?" she said, coming forward with gracious welcome in the phrase, "Are you going to help Gloster pass the evening pleasantly? I shall be at Mrs. Van Blancken's dance, and want him to enjoy himself."

Beeckman Gerard gave a moment's look towards his brother and then replied:

"No, we have arranged it together already. If you permit me, I will take his place."

Gladys felt an intangible repulse. Gerard remained silent, looking down at the flaming coals on the hearth, which were placed there to add to the homelike aspect of the room, and which threw changing shadows on his face. The words "I will take his place," pained her indefinably; she felt an inequality in their love's reciprocation; she knew that she could not endure another to take for a moment her place by him. She did not remember that he had not yet replied to Beeckman's offer, and stood, mechanically fitting on her glove, her eyes upon her husband.

"Perhaps I am—mistaken: you would rather go alone?" Beeckman Gerard broke the silence with a

peculiar keen intonation of repressed pride and resentment in his voice.

"Go alone?" Gladys turned with a slight strained smile: he had recalled her. "No, I had rather you would come with me: if you would care to do so, Beeckman?"

"I am ready," he answered, in his usual manner. "I suppose you will go as far as the club, Gloster?"

Gerard left the mantel and replied with a certain moodiness:

"All right."

Five minutes later they were driving down Fifth avenue in silence.

The brothers had never been in true accord since Beeckman had suggested the possibility of Gloster's marriage being regretted by him in the future. Gerard had since then feared his brother's penetration, and felt indefinably uneasy with him: the former sense of freedom and *camaraderie* was gone. This was not owing to any perceptible alteration in Beeckman, but was the result of his own misgivings and suspicions: since his brother had estimated, provisionally, his probable future feelings, a sense of surveillance haunted him. The observation which had indicated the same contingencies which his own intelligence was secretly considering, was capable of noting the subtlest changes in his relations with his wife; of detecting every grade of feeling through which his passion might pass in its decline. Gerard did not attribute to his brother a desire to watch, but felt a continuous wish to elude his involuntary powers of scrutiny. Having at present no reason to evade these, he, however, felt a constant sensitiveness which became defined irritation during such scenes as the one just terminated.

Beeckman was unaware of this: but his own feelings

had undergone a change, and he perceived, in another manner, the difference which had come between them. He knew Gerard's fierce and fickle temper; his underlying coldness; and his egotistic contempt for pain in others as an experience which his guarded personality never permitted to approach itself. He believed him unable either to estimate or to appreciate the character of Gladys, and foresaw a time when, weary of her and of the legitimate bonds which united them, he would disregard her loyalty and love, and abandon her to neglect and to the bitterness of a wasted life. Gerard had once been impulsive, but had acquired command of himself; his brother had never restrained an impulse and consequently was often influenced less by reason than by immediate feeling. Thus he permitted this idea to obtain an increasing hold upon him, and, though at present unjustified, to prejudice him against Gerard. For Gladys he felt a mingled reverence, compassion and vivid admiration; it was his feeling for her which, unknown to him, animated him against his brother. He involuntarily put himself in Gerard's place, contrasting the actions of the latter with his own under the same conditions. He felt disproportionately grieved for Gladys and gratified regarding himself, when she turned from Gerard and acquiesced to his becoming her escort. A new interest had entered his life, dual and vivid; that of observing her, and that of passionately regretting her probable future destiny. He did not comprehend how profoundly the idea of her had taken hold upon him; he was blinded to this by the belief that he felt for her impersonal compassion.

Gladys, ignorant of the thoughts which separately occupied the two men, could not dismiss a wistful fear that she had angered her husband. The carriage, going rapidly, passed the Hotel Brunswick, and travers-

ing the broad open space between the Fifth Avenue Hotel and Madison Square crossed Twenty-third street, and approached the Union Club. Gladys laid her hand on Gerard's arm appealingly.

"Gloster?"

He roused himself and looked towards her.

"Gloster, have I angered you?"

Her touch still lingered timidly; he closed his hand over hers and pressed it. "No," he answered quietly.

The carriage stopped before the entrance of the Union Club; Gerard, without saying more, left his seat and mounted the steps. Gladys, watching him, saw the doors of the Club open to admit him; his figure was silhouetted against the blaze of the chandelier within. The carriage started forward, and she sank back on her seat with a little sigh.

In the two minutes which had passed a sudden revelation had enlightened Beeckman Gerard. In hearing Gladys' wistful appeal to her husband, he experienced a violent indignant impulse. He felt that she was already becoming aware of his prevailing indifference, and tacitly humiliating herself to obtain even the concession of the single monosyllable he replied. Beeckman could not see her hand meet the response of Gerard's; thought he left her without further adieu; and attributed to this the sigh with which she ceased to watch his going. An ungovernable jealousy seized him with the sudden fierceness of his Spanish blood; the rage of Cain came on him; he wished he could gain, by striking down his brother, the place she gave him in her heart. For a minute, controlled by the passion which had suddenly unmasked itself, Beeckman Gerard was inert and swept upon its current unresisting. Then he grappled for reason desperately, and faced the truth. He loved his brother's wife, and

the gradual increase of his passion had rendered poignant those feelings of pity for her which had been at first provisional and balanced. Disguising itself in every form most insidious and deceptive, it revealed itself in its fullest vigor, having obtained entire hold upon him. He cursed his blindness, following the course of its treacherous development; and, as the face of Gladys was thrown into pale relief by a passing lamplight, the emotions which rose in him showed him the length to which he was already betrayed. Bitter rage, self-contempt and passion contended in him; he felt the profound hold his forbidden love had upon him, and an indescribable anguish overcame him at the thought of relinquishing Gladys at the moment of finding her most dear. A certain stern honor remaining with him through this combat of his soul against itself, forced him towards his final decision. He determined to return to Paris. At the moment of this resolve, the result of an incalculable struggle, the carriage stopped before the house of Van Blancken.

Gerard entered the Union Club and made his way to the card-room. Jesse B. Hartshorn was forming a whist party, and challenged him to join it as his partner. The two men, equally scientific players, balanced each other superbly, and scored a series of victories which rendered Hartshorn exultant. If this brilliant man of the world had a hobby, it was whist playing; and while in every pursuit he was distinguished by individual force and energy, on whist he directed the full strength of his soul. His science and resource at whist were known as alone inferior to his wit in *repartee*. In each he was exceptionally brilliant: and an occasional expression of his patrician face rendered it possible to believe that this brilliancy covered the

depth of a soul capable of feeling from the superficial survey of his world.

Hartshorn threw down the final trump of the hand on the last trick.

"That's ours, Gerard; and takes us out," he said, drawing the cards towards him with the winner's instinctive gesture of possession.

Gerard traced with his eyes the cipher distinctive of cards made for use in the Union Club, and rose. He was fatigued, and, making his adieux, left the card-room. Lemuel Shapira met him in the vestibule, and stopped him with a hearty greeting.

"How are you, Gerard? What's the matter? you look dull."

"I can't say," answered Gerard, moodily. "Tired of whist playing, for one thing."

"Whist-playing!" exclaimed the broker. "I don't blame you. Come with me and I'll guarantee you better sport than that."

"Where are you going?" responded Gerard, as the entrance doors shut behind them.

"I'm going to Sallie Jewel's to supper; there will be a lot of us," answered Shapira.

"I'll come," Gerard said, quietly, looking ahead of him, and falling into step with his companion as they turned up Fifth avenue.

Shapira was gay and communicative; Gerard responded coolly; he was endeavoring to bring himself into the same careless humor without success. His peculiar contradictory disposition was liable to unaccountable phases; effects produced by the lightest causes, and pervading his consciousness with restless mental atmospheres. Connecting unconsciously the episodes of the evening which had added *ennui* to irritation, Gerard felt entitled to some relaxation, and attempted

to enjoy its prospect. However, it was not until they reached the house that he found any interest in it. An uneasy memory of Gladys' pure caressing look as he stooped to kiss her throat, mixed with impatience at his coming. This return to the scenes he had known before his marriage reflected on himself ironically; he was arbitrarily exacting, and as he did no longer habitually frequent them, felt the visit superfluous and inconsistent. He never acted half measures. As he followed Shapira into the vestibule, and leaving their overcoats, entered the reception room, he forgot these things, however, and looked around him with new interest. Furnished richly in a light French style, with peach-colored satins and gilded wood inlaid with mother-of-pearl, the large room seemed to reflect the light of the chandelier in its centre, and high mirrors gave back the figures of half a dozen women in brilliant costumes. Sallie Jewel's eyebrows lifted as she saw Shapira enter followed by Gerard. Celestine had constrained herself to acknowledge to her the fact of his marriage with her former mistress, judiciously sacrificing her vanity to obtain the valuable counsels of her friend. Shapira laughed out a greeting all round, and introduced Gerard. Some brokers and young society pets were lounging in the chairs of the Louis Seize style, exchanging badinage with the women; and one of these was surprised at the new expression which changed his companion's face. The point of the last high-flavored witticism going the rounds of the clubs was lost; her lips set together and grew pale; her eyes looked steadily away from him across the room. The angry youngster (to whom experience would have taught equanimity) followed her look. Gerard and Shapira were standing by the mantel, speaking to Sallie Jewel, whose arm, in its warm flesh-tints and

perfect moulding, lay on the marble with an indescribably seductive effect of contrast.

"Come on," said Sallie, raising her arched brows again and looking round the room. "If you girls aren't hungry, I am; and I'm going in to supper."

Celestine had risen and approached them quietly.

"So am I," she said, with a smile, looking full in the eyes of Gerard. He recognized her face, in which the peculiar effect produced by her pale lips was lessening; and bowing to her he offered his arm. With a second glance of coquetry mingled with another element he could not define, she gracefully accepted his escort and followed their hostess into the dining-room.

"I have seen you before," said Celestine, quietly. "You were driving to-day with a beautiful girl. Will you tell me who she was?"

She spoke without any suggestion of coquetry, and her look of simple enquiry met and disarmed his sudden renewed irritation. He might have answered her discourteously or refused to gratify her. Their regards met, his eyes glittering with a swift light; hers steady, brilliant, and, as she looked, suddenly glowing with an inward luminance. They watched each other for a moment as duellists might before the final signal, then Gerard spoke.

"Yes, I believe I once saw you at Delmonico's."

She regarded him watchfully a moment, and, disguising her anger, spoke again.

"Do you find life as amusing now as it was then?" she asked with a subtle latent defiance. He returned her look with some surprise.

"Decidedly I do," he said.

Celestine bent her head; and commenced to speak to the man at her right; it was the angry youngster, but his spirit was broken and he welcomed her return.

Gerard, perplexed and baffled, continued to look at her with curiosity. Her small head, exquisitely dressed, was well set on, and he marked its grace. He speculated on her motives in commencing and abandoning the conversation; and his surmises did not gratify him. He felt that the motive existed; he had been sure of that when her eyes gave out the sudden glow like an animal's at dark, and through which certain human eyes betray the emotion disguised by every other feature. He drank a glass of Veuve Clicquot without discerning the flavor of it, and, irritated to fresh interest by her continued speech with the boy beside her, determined to satisfy himself.

"You asked me a question which I answered. It is now my turn. Why did you ask it?"

Gerard's low distinct voice cut across her own. She abandoned the youth a second time, and turned to Gerard with brilliant eyes of audacious provocation. "I have you, then," she answered boldly, setting her white teeth together and making him a little grimace. "I made you answer, of course. You can't make me!"

The disguised motive underlying this gave a certain additional challenge and exasperation to the reply. He was at once incensed and amused, mystified and fascinated. She waited, watching him.

"Do you want to know?" she said, sipping the champagne foam rising to the brim of her glass, and still watching him with the baffling expression which he could not interpret rightly. Gerard's eyes were glittering and fixed upon her. He did not answer her. She persisted.

"You do wish to know. Say so!"

A smile touched her lips, quick, mocking and alluring, with a little derision in it. Gerard would have

restrained himself, but the arch controlling mischief of it infected him. Smiling back in her eyes he said:

"I do. Is that enough?"

"Shall I tell you?"

"Yes."

"Then because it amused me to ask you. That is all."

Gerard did not change a muscle, but the look that leapt into his eyes gave her the same triumphant sense of defiance and power that a good rider feels in meeting the efforts of a rebellious horse.

"Now you are angry; are you not?" she asked, quietly regarding him. Gerard felt that she was making a fool of him out of hand, but did not see how to extricate himself.

"I?" he answered, however. "No. When I disturb myself it is for something worth while."

She took this at its value, and laughed at him across her champagne.

"All right," she said. "You have come as near acknowledging how mad I make you as a man can reasonably do, so we'll be friends after this and not quarrel. And we will drink a loving cup together, too!"

She foamed up some Piper Heidsieck in her glass, and sipped it; then she held it towards him. "Drink!" she exclaimed imperatively, showing her white teeth in a laugh. Gerard met her eyes as he took the glass.

"What shall I drink to?" he demanded.

"To our future friendship, of course!" she answered. "Or I'll know you are angry still."

He drained the glass and set it down.

"I drank," he said, "to the hour when you should meet with a man who would make himself your master."

"You could not!" she said, her defiant lips setting heavily, and a feverish excitement in her eyes. Gerard's look glittered like steel. Her bare throat tempted him with an incredible longing to seize it and strangle the derision out of her. Forgetting everything in a fierce impulse of contention roused by her mocking *beauté de diable*—

"We will see," he said, speaking very low.

Beeckman Gerard kept his decision before him throughout his time as Gladys' escort. He spoke with her as seldom as possible: he feared to be tried beyond endurance and to betray himself. Constantly reflecting that next day would place him beyond the necessity for self-repression, he sustained himself by an effort of will exhausting in its engrossing tension. Remaining at a distance from Gladys, he appeared to watch the dance. Beyond the circling figures, and giving them an effect of unreality, he seemed to see the lonely vast horizon of the ocean stretching, domed with a cold night sky. The isolation of this already came upon him: sharpening his sense of loss to an intolerable keen pain. As time passed he fought through the most unsparing agony of his life. A shade of pallor settled on his face like the trace of hunger or of cold.

When Gladys was ready to leave the dance, he saw her into her carriage.

"You will not need me further," he said, as he stood with his hand on the door. "Good night, Gladys." He spoke in a hard, even tone of voice, at once suppressed and forced.

"Good-night, Beeckman," she answered, smiling. "I shall tell Gloster what care of me you took. I hope you are not tired?"

She had detected the peculiar sound in his voice, and

inquired its cause with her habitual sympathy. He felt he must reach the end at once and took her hand with an abrupt hard grip.

"I am not tired," he answered. "Good-night, Gladys. Good-bye."

He broke the gaze by a swift turn of his head, and shut the carriage door. He had resolved not to see her again; and Good-bye is sometimes an eternal leave-taking, which absorbs the past and the future in immeasurable silence. Beeckman Gerard walked till he reached his house and summoned his valet. Directing him to make ready for the journey, he left the place again, driven by a sleepless impulse of unrest. It was an hour past midnight, and the streets were quiet. The great *façade* of the Fifth Avenue Hotel rose white and blank as the face of a dead man; in the steely arc of the night sky the stars of Orion pulsated. A cab went by with a drowsy rumble, and was lost in the upper distance of Broadway. He passed up Fifth avenue, an aimless attraction drawing him towards the house of Gerard. What did it cost? he would never see her again, he thought, dully, walking with persistent effort. He passed the house and continued on, attempting to exhaust his physical strength that he might obtain mental oblivion in sleep. A man advancing towards him regarded him twice with scrutiny. Then Gloster Gerard stood in his path and spoke to him.

"What ails you, Beeckman?" he demanded.

His voice strung all the other's jarred nerves to tension; he looked into his brother's face. "Nothing ails me, Gloster, but I am going back to Paris by to-morrow's boat. I am glad I met you; we can say good-bye here and dispense with a formal——"

"See here, Beeckman, do you mean what you are

saying? Are you sure you're clear what you are talking about?"

Beeckman perceived his brother's misgivings and answered him plainly.

"It seems eccentric. I am perfectly free of liquor, however, as my breath must show, and I know what I am saying. I have reasons for wishing to return at once, and shall leave New York to-morrow."

"Well, old fellow, I am sorry to lose you; if you want, I will say good-bye for you to Gladys. It seems rather unexpected, altogether." He took his brother's hand, "Good-bye, Beeckman."

"Good-bye."

Gerard passed on his way with a strange remembrance of his brother's voice. He felt baffled and perplexed. Beeckman went blindly on towards the north, driven by the furious pain of his forbidden passion. He had forced himself with an incalculable effort to take his brother's hand: he felt as he did so a choking fury of despair which blinded him like fire.

"While I am wandering here like a lost soul, he is returning—to her!"

He turned from Gerard with the single strangely-spoken word, and fled. Next day he left New York.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ASHES.

"AH—ARCHIE," said Peter Ambleon, pushing open the door of his brother's private office, "can you spare—er—a moment or two?"

"I guess I'll have to, now you're here, Peter," Archie answered: it was not his method to waste civility on as poor a man as the stock-dabbling clerk in the Empire City Bank.

"Erghem," commenced Peter, clearing his throat with his elderly semi-cough, "I put twenty dollars into Total Wreck the other day, expecting it was going to rise. It—ah—it fell instead, and I can't sell my stock yet without losing half the money. I need five dollars—er—to pay my washing-bill which has run some weeks; and—ah—can you manage to loan it to me?"

"I suppose you'd offer that d——d Total Wreck stock as security, eh?" snarled Archie Ambleon. "I tell you I can't stand this sort of thing. Quit fooling with mines, and your ten-cent pay will keep you from sponging on me, at any rate. I believe I've let you have fifty dollars, all told, between this and the fall. What the mischief have you done with it? Gambled on stock and lost it at poker. And now, by Jove! you are here after more!"

Archie had become a man of property: received large commissions from Belmore & Co.: lived in a mansion owned by his wife; and was conscious of success. Peter, his brother, had become an obtrusive and beggarly reminder lately, and one of which he could not

rid himself by any volume of abuse. He was aware of this, and cursed the mendicant callousness of Peter. Peter, however, had the best of the situation, and he knew it.

Fixing his small green eyes upon his brother, whose figure was losing the elegance of the beau's in the solidity of the man of wealth, Peter commenced again.

"You are—ah—a fellow of sense, Archie; and you can take in a thing all round. There is a very simple way of—er—providing for this sort of thing in future. You can—erghem—in fact, you are able to help me up in the world."

Archie grew sallow, and sat watching Peter with a painful expression of craving to pitch him out of the window and fear of consequences vivid on his face. Peter stood, equally vigilant but more humble, the nerve-twitch strong above his eyebrow, and the simian hang of his arms and stoop of his loose-jointed shoulders emphasizing his habitual air of failure and neglect.

"Great Cæsar!" ejaculated Archie Ambleon. Peter began again.

"You see—ah—this is my eighteenth year in the Empire City Bank. My salary is not as large as the average Broadway policeman's, and—er—fellows who haven't served six months get promoted over my head. I am—erghem—a philosopher, and I find amongst them an interesting study in human nature, but I recognize—er—that I am wasting time. It would be better for—I may say, Archie, for both of us, if I occupied a position more appropriate for a fellow—ah—who is your brother."

Archie gave way to unexampled profanity. Peter watched him carefully till he waited to take breath.

"I have," recommenced the elder Ambleon, "lived

very quietly indeed. Very few of—er—your society friends know of my existence, Archie—"

"I'm not going to be the first to introduce a played-out sponge like you to them, then! By George!—Good God!"

"Ah, wait a moment," interposed Peter Ambleon. "Very few of your rich friends know me; but—er—there's no reason why I should not show myself and ask their assistance if you won't give me help—"

"You d——d skunk!" yelled Archie leaping from his chair.

"I am glad you see the force of the argument," said Peter, strategically placing the office-table between them, and keeping his eye upon him. The broker fell back in his revolving chair, purpling with fury and apprehension.

"What the —— do you want, then?" he gasped. Peter Ambleon saw his chance.

"Ah—some gentlemanly position, which would have the advantage of being lucrative. I do not wish to appear exacting—" he paused with condescension. His small green eye was twinkling under the large bland bumps of his forehead. The compensation was so exquisitely balanced that he lingered over it as he had done over Archie's choice Regalias when his patron gave him one. There was silence but for the rustle of the ticker's paper ribbons as they glided down, and coiled within their basket. Then:

"I'll see about it," said Archie's strangled voice. "But you'd better get out of this before I have enough strength to kick you out, by—"

"Thank you, Archie," said Peter Ambleon, shutting the door behind him.

On the afternoon following Gerard's appearance at her house, Sallie Jewel drove with Celestine.

"What did you think?" asked the latter eagerly, scrutinizing her with her treacherous black eyes. Sallie turned a swift elusive penetrating glance on her companion.

"I think that you did well," she answered, "especially as he met you then for the first time." This was the only allusion she made to Celestine's former fabrication, but her eyes, full of mingled derision and amusement, expressed her meaning for her. She still retained that indescribable hold over Celestine's imagination which had first created her ascendancy with her; and occupied the same place in the mind of the successful courtesan as she had done in that of the chorus-girl. Her subtlety governed the other's coarseness.

"Well?" said Celestine, interrogatively, with a tone of latent defiance. "What more?"

"It was the only method. If you had treated him otherwise he would have found himself fatigued, and you would have lost every possible subsequent chance. As it is—I heard everything where I was, though the rest did not pay attention—he will not forget. He will return."

"And his wife—?" Celestine's mouth set in a smile which showed her strong teeth like those of a beast of prey.

"His wife?" responded Sallie Jewel, coolly. "Ah, that is an affair between yourselves. I once suffered through a wife, and I hate all wives. I hope she will suffer."

"She shall!" muttered Celestine Lovelight, looking ahead as if she saw the future there before her. A smile passed across the other's lips like the flickering pale reflection of a flame on steel.

Gerard felt a certain relief in the knowledge of his brother's departure. It seemed to remove at a breath

all the distasteful reminders suggested by his presence. Gerard was almost angered with himself when he perceived the exhilarating sense of freedom which followed it with him. He had felt an indefinable latent dissatisfaction for some time past; that restlessness which inevitably visits a man accustomed to absolute liberty, when he contracts responsibilities and imagines that his sphere of action is narrowed down and his life become less diversified. The suggestion of monotony was sufficient to render Gerard restive and exacting: the incident of his brother's going cleared the mental atmosphere and restored his equilibrium. His reawakened interest was claimed by Celestine's adroit exasperation of him: in resenting her insolent audacity he became engrossed with the idea of reprisal. He was continually perplexed in attempting to detect the underlying motive he believed existed, and this was complicated by a memory, intangible and vague, which connected her face with some previous undenoted period of his life. She had once carried a message to him from Mrs. Varian at Newport, and his reviving remembrance of her appearance evaded connection in his mind with time or place. The second expression of her smile continued to baffle him, and sustained the interest. He determined to see her again, although her attraction for him was not yet rendered powerful by personal fascination. He was diverted and piqued, and followed up the incident of the supper through a kind of resentful curiosity.

Gerard had spent an hour at the Union, and he drew up his dog-cart before the entrance of his house at the moment Gladys' carriage reached it. Springing down from the high vehicle, he offered his hand to his wife in alighting. His dark eyes, singularly animated, gave a new expression to his face. Gladys acknowledged

his attention with a soft quick glance as she reached the sidewalk. She still felt a magnetism in his touch, and retained her freshness of emotional impression.

"Gloster, I am going to stay home this evening, and we will have such a happy time together! Are you glad?"

They had reached their own apartment, and she laid her hand lightly on his sleeve, looking up into his face. Gerard's eyelids contracted; the animation he had shown disappeared. Without meeting her smile, luminous with welcome and anticipation:

"I am engaged myself to-night," he said, briefly but with a certain regret. "I am very sorry, Gladys."

The look of hope faded off her face, like the roselight touching a mist at sunset; she released his arm quietly, still standing near him. Then, through an effort which she concealed, she spoke with a sweet beseeching and petulance.

"Will you not break it for me?"

Had this been any engagement but one with Lemuel Shapira at Delmonico's, Gerard would have yielded. As it was he felt for the first time that brutal impulse, common to most of us, warning him that she was always ready, while this other chance was fugitive and transient. He stooped and kissed her raised face without fervor, and turned to remove his overcoat.

"I would if I could," he answered. "But it is something I cannot waive."

She felt the sudden keen pang of a woman who meets, with the first refusal from the man she loves, his first suggestion of indifference. This is the most cruel of disillusions; the approach of the Inevitable, the beginning of the end. Gladys felt a swift humiliation without attempting to reach its cause. She was silent.

Gerard left her early; he felt an involuntary slight embarrassment, which took the edge from his anticipation. With his restive resolve to go was mingled an uninvited compunction. Then he thought, with the knowledge of his power, "Bah! I can make it up to her with a kiss;" and, in order to escape the reproach which her quiet figure had for him, he left the house and, going to the Union Club, passed there the time until the hour of his appointment. "She need not stay home," he contended to himself, as she recurred to his mind, and he recalled her, sitting by the broad hearth in a simple robe of white silk stuff that caught the firelight at play, reflecting its phantom lustres in contrast with her face's softened calm. At the same time he thought, "Of most men's souls more than half belongs to the devil. There are few but would leave her, as I am doing, to see the other one."

Gerard was unable to deceive himself, and never tried to do so. He sustained by this candor a certain self-respect.

Gladys sat quietly by the hearth long after he had left her there. The flame lustres played on the shining silks of her gown and on her face; and this, with a pale calm on it suggesting the cold lines of a marble face, looked steadily into the fire. Sandy wakened, and blinked his amber eyes, and came towards her; flicking his full ringed tail, he sprang up lightly into her lap. This had a sudden strange effect upon her: the calm of her repose dispersed; and throwing her arms around him as he lay, she bowed her face upon his supple shape and wept there silently. The little yellow beast lay quiet and began to purr. She no longer felt the need of a human breast on which to lean, and was subtly comforted.

A sense of great loneliness had come to her when

Gerard refused her wish. She endeavored to evade and disregard this, but it surrounded her intangibly like a rising mist. Her love, which rendered her sensitive to every phase of his manner towards her, seemed to warn her of an unnamed influence which had freshly touched their lives. She experienced a vague abiding chill, and her loneliness became intensified by the memory of the hours she had hoped for; alone, but alone with him. She sought to dismiss the undesired sense of foreboding. She wished for the sweet smile of Mrs. Varian, and her caressing hands upon her hair; she tried to recall the counsels of Caprice, who advised her constantly. But she could only remember that he was gone, and she alone. The sudden coming of the little yellow beast touched her like the greeting of a friend. Seeking for sympathy, his artless companionship seemed to approach her with it; the tension snapped, and the tears which fell on his warm barred fur were very comforting. Gathering him in her arms, she rose and went to the piano. There he laid himself lazily upon the polished darkness of the case; and Gladys, after caressing him, set before her the mazurkas of Chopin.

An hour passed; the chiming clock had sent its light clash four times to mingle with the music. Sandy coiled his large soft yellow tail around him and slept. Gladys was alone unrestful: seeking to lose her thoughts in the wandering music, and forgetting the music in her thoughts. She tried to interpret her thoughts through the music, but the beautiful replying voices of the 39th Mazurka sounded like lovers singing to each other that phrase which is eternal; and the music was an irony. She tried to reflect her present in the music, the happy present of their united lives, and the music grieved, its

swallow-flights soaring like the sound of the wind at night. She tried to describe her future in the music, her calm future blending into his, and the music breaking in dissonance like a sob, her hands dropped on the silenced keys. She felt other presences about her than were seen: the Past, the Present and the inscrutable Future. She felt silence, loneliness and fear, but she did not know what she feared. She craved, with an intensity of longing, to feel his lips on her throat, his presence near her, his keen and passionate eyes sinking their look into hers. Her eager pulses beat full with the warm tides of her blood, and then, chilled through, she crept to her seat by the hearth. The first hour of the morning sounded, and she was alone.

In the first months of Gladys' marriage, Caprice had developed their acquaintance towards intimacy. She desired to give this girl, in whom she had always discerned a rare depth and sweetness, the benefit of her own advice, intuition and experience. With her habitual bewitching manner, she had gossiped to Gladys a thousand trifles, each full of penetration and pertinence, and, combined, a valuable collection of warning and advice in the art of retaining after marriage the ascendancy acquired before it. Caprice, in a costume by Worth, emphasizing, with those little gesticulations of hers so fascinating, her tactful counsels; drinking Caravan tea, and not disguising her concern for Gladys' future happiness, as a matron of longer standing and experience than her friend; and finally referring to Van Blancken as a perfected confirmation and example of her own successful treatment, was a study enchanting and piquant. Had her husband observed her then, he would have fallen in love over again; however, owing to her charm and subtlety, he did that very often.

As Gladys sat by the fire, the dainty figure of Caprice came before her, and she recalled some of her warnings, comparing their counsel with her own past actions.

"Do not insist on his remaining always near you; some women think that a man is then secure, but he becomes in fact less so, as he then, like all prisoners, craves for freedom, hates you his jailor, and desires to escape. A woman must retain her husband rather by her own fascination than through her rights; for those who cannot do so—v'la! we have not to do with them!"

The little matron, secure and confident, had smiled with the fine cruelty of contempt. Gladys felt that smile's expression as if it newly touched her on a wound. Her memory went on through other remarks of Caprice, with a strained attention, as if they compelled her to follow them by some magnetic force.

"Young wives too often believe their husbands are lovers permanently secured. They think the battle won; the final victory achieved. They do not recognize that they have only yet reached the beginning. Before marriage there is everything to obtain; afterwards, except with a few spiritual souls, who have sufficient intelligence to desire to study one another, and who find there also something to study,—afterwards there is nothing. Afterwards is when, your fortunes bound together, you must make certain the union of your hearts. Women who are foolish then believe their power secure; those who are wise seek to render it so. It is then that you should study every inclination, every humor of your husband, and establish on the basis of a perfect knowledge of him, your influence, asserted through the guidance of that knowledge."

Gladys looked at the dull fire, which dropped a few grey ashes on the hearth.

"I have tried," she thought, "I have tried."

Then she felt again that absorbing loneliness, that

craving for his touch and look. A heavy door slipped open and closed; she heard a footfall in the marble vestibule. Her heart seemed to arrest its action. Gerard entered the room.

She did not call his name or fly towards him. She rose and stood, with a pitiful look of appeal and hesitation, by the fading fire while he advanced. Her lips were trembling with the breaths which passed between them; her eyes, on which the broad pupils dilated, had the entreaty and submission of a dog's. He did not comprehend her attitude, and mentally misconstrued it. Pausing for a moment, he was suddenly aware of her pleading hands upon his arm, her face appealing to him, her whole soft presence beseeching him.

"Gloster!—beloved!"

He did not respond; he was startled and perplexed.

"O, say a kind word to me!—love me a little!—I have been so lonely!"

Gerard felt a sudden exceeding irritation, and a look of anger shot into his eyes. With a keen chill in his voice, like the sound of steel on ice,

"You need not have stayed home or waited up for me; I had rather you had not," he said.

She looked at him a moment, a dazed pain making blank her eyes with an expression of loss. She turned away and leaned her brow against the marble of the mantel

"Dear heart, I have tried to please you. I have tried; I have done my best. Do not be angry with me now? I was very lonely—and I always tried. . . ." A shiver shook her, and she ceased with a little moan. Her hold on the marble loosed and she slipped down quietly before he could reach her. Her hair was mingling with the crumbled ashes of the fire which was extinct.

Gerard swore a great oath quietly, and lifted her up in his arms. She lay there with a langorous inertness

which subtly appealed to him: her head fallen back from its place on his shoulder showed her throat's white flesh, like the texture of a lily. He carried her easily out of the room, up the broad staircase, and entered their apartment. A soft light burned in the opal-tinted globes there, and showed him the bed where he laid her down. Ashes still clouded her shining hair, which had dropped its length from the silver pin; and her blank white face, turned up towards his own, reminded him abruptly of a dead face lying there. The impression was a ghastly one, and held him strongly; he had never seen her before without response to his touch and presence. He was bringing brandy to her as he paused and awe invaded him. A sort of remorse touched his soul with a pity for her deeper than his love had ever been.

"If she were dead," he thought, "she would be beyond pain and beyond regret."

He looked at her pure face with the tenderness of youth pathetic on its innocence, and, bending over her, he kissed her brow. As his clinging lips left her temple she gave a low soft half-breathed sigh.

"Is it you—Gloster?" she whispered. "I thought—are you near me? O, I was afraid! I dreamed I had lost my ring of the snake—and—you said—it had taken your love away from me." She pushed her hair off her cheek with a slight dazed gesture. "Gloster! —Gloster!—kiss me—hold me close! I am afraid. . ." Then her head sank against his breast and she was quiet awhile with his arms about her. The profound security she felt in that contact, the soothing she found in that embrace, he knew, as he knew his own unworthiness. Remorse came to him, and regret, and shame, but these do not fire again a waning passion. Its dull ashes were expiring in his heart; and her hair was whitened with the dead fire's ashes.

CHAPTER XXV.

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

IT was again the last day of the passing year: films of white frost mailed the trees on Madison Square with a crystal armor, on which the rays of the electric lights broke in brilliant effects; the great bronze Seward, counting the thousands who passed upon his tablets, held a pencil that glittered like an icicle, and wrote in the strange hieroglyphics of hoar-frost. The luminous blue of the skies had deepened, seeming to concentrate its brilliancy in stars; a quality in the keen air gave resonance to sound, and the car-bells tinkled as if the tired beasts that carried them were seeking to express their gaiety. The great reckoning-day of the year was passing, and every one balanced his account with Time. Some men forgot to forecast their new year in looking back upon the days of the one past, and amongst these was Edward Golden. Some men determined to wipe their slate, and begin their ill-directed lives anew; hailing with pusillanimous joy the fresh-installed President of Time's Republic. Some men, who took things as they came, concerned themselves rather with the present than the past or future; these were philosophers, whether of the Stoic or Epicurean school. Some men finding their life-thread, like the Old Year's, spinning thin, died, and sought to reach the secrets of that Eternity into which he was absorbed. A few mourned these: but mourners, like friends, are rare. The year was passing away.

Fashion diverted itself, and gathered especially

house of Gerard, and a *bal masqué* at Caprice's; Hartshorn had also evolved the idea, carried out by Mrs. Belmore, of an elaborate german, the favors in which were silver trumpets tuned to form one chord, and blown at the stroke of midnight, on the instant of the church-bells and fog-horns starting to usher in the new year.

Gladys, in a toilet of silver tissue, patterned with a frost of pearls, passed amongst her brilliant multitude of guests with a momentary anxious expression. Gerard, who had planned the ball, and taken an interest in its success and her enjoyment, had just spoken to her quietly in passing—

"I am feeling rather strangely, and shall leave the house awhile. No one will observe my absence."

She had answered with tender apprehension, made keen by seeing him paling as she spoke; but he smiled and left her, reassuring her, and saying the night air would be enough. After this the interest of the ball was culminating: in its brilliant climax of excitement the clocks began their long hour count; the Old Year was spurned and the New Year welcomed; the Carnival of Noise commenced; and everything human repeated once more the old irony, "*Le roi est mort; vive le roi!*"

A small silver bell in the hall of a private apartment in one of the large uptown flats, filled the ante-chamber with its ringing. Curtains of silk divided, suggesting a perspective of luxurious warmth and color, suffused by a soft rose-light; and a woman, trailing the length of her loose robe of *crêpe de chine* as she advanced, unfastened the entrance door. A man entered silently and stood within as she re-secured this deftly.

"Then you have come?" She turned towards him with a certain supple grace, and a smile of blending

triumph and passion. Her flashing eyes were softened in the shadow. "Oh well, I thought you would."

"I am here," he answered, coldly. "You made your conditions. I chose to obey them."

She laughed, a light ironical sound, and full of fickle insincere inflections. "That is all right," she said, still resting her eyes upon him as they faced each other. "If your wife becomes lonely, why, she can call up happy memories!"

Passing the curtains, she disappeared. He followed her, stifling a curse.

Since the night of Gerard's absence from her Gladys had been aware of an increasing sense of isolation. The necessary intercourse with society occupied her time, but rendered her spiritual loneliness more chilling and distinct. She could not analyze the new phase which had invaded her life, but comprehended its presence with a feeling of powerlessness to resist it. Gerard, always attentive to her and considerately gentle, was yet often absent; and, when together, their intercourse had lost the magnetic responsive quality which once made its charm for both. She bravely attempted to disguise her discouragement from him, and to re-ignite his interest; at the same time shadowed by the most intolerable misgiving a woman can feel, the fear of her power's decadence in the life of the man she loves. Rather by her own intuition than through any slightest suggestion from him, she felt that the absorption of their mutual passion was past; that her love remained, alone. She reproached herself for this, instead of accepting the eternal fickleness of passion; and regretted with a silent continual grief that she had not known how to keep the spell unbroken. Gerard knew nothing of her state of feeling, or if he divined it blinded himself. He appeared with her in society; paid her

continual attention when alone; and even caressed her, though in his caresses an inexplicable tenderness mingled with regret had replaced the electric intensity of passion. Gladys treasured these suggestions of his love for her, and never ceased to stifle the thought of their division. Sometimes abandoning herself to the conviction that she was no longer dear to him, she experienced such a despair as seemed to her like the advance of death. This she combated with every tender word of his, or look; disguising the remnants of an out-worn passion in the remembered likeness of love. Gradually she grew so fearful of the thought of any change in him, that she resolutely kept it back, and would not think upon it. This, though she did not read it so, was a more pathetic evidence of her belief than any other could be. She sought society and rarely spent an evening at her home, unless entertaining there. A subtle instinct forbade her again to suggest to her husband one passed alone together. Continually conscious of the change which had pervaded their lives, and seeking to escape its memory, Gladys endured an unspoken martyrdom which, common to women, has no parallel with men. Forever attempting to interpose between herself and the truth her cheated faith, while aware of duping herself, she moved in an atmosphere of unreality. Life appeared to have become a sinister dream which involved her in its phases: she felt a terrible powerlessness, and longed for some awakening.

The obstacles Celestine set in Gerard's way, had the calculated effect of confirming her attraction. Beginning with a sense of resentment towards her, and galled with the knowledge that she had commenced by fooling him to the top of her bent, he regarded their acquaintance something in the way that a man does a

witty speech made at his expense. He carries on the conversation with the hope of making reprisals: Gerard continued the acquaintance, and found in it a second interest. Celestine, satisfied that she had begun judiciously, continued to pique and to provoke him, and discovered that he recalled her face without placing it in his memory. This fact she used to stimulate his interest, and constantly refused to reveal the secret to him.

"It was because I had known you before that I recognized you in Delmonico's and on the Drive, and again when you came to Sallie Jewel's. Did your wife send you there?" she asked, fixing on him her large black eyes, and with a brilliant smile.

Gerard had already learnt to estimate that smile, and met her eyes significantly.

"See here, I don't find it needful to have my wife spoken of by you,—you hear?"

However, he confronted a woman whose audacity never failed her, and she bent towards him coolly.

"I think she would feel that *you* were the one who ought to keep quiet, myself," she said. Gerard's veins swelled on his throat and forehead: she looked in his eyes and laughed. "I often make you wish you could strangle me, eh? Then why do you come here so often? Perhaps you leave your wife because you find anger more amusing than *ennui*?"

From that time Celestine possessed for him a stinging contradictory fascination: one of those fickle vicious inclinations which, dominant till gratified, then disappear. Conscious of this, she withdrew herself, and met him with redoubled coolness and insolence; rejecting every advance he made with malign defiance and derision. Gerard, inflamed by her ridicule, and feeling the keenness of a hunter on the trail, persisted ur-

gently. She amused herself (and Sallie Jewel) until a fortnight before New Year's Day: then she changed her policy.

"But you will not fulfil my conditions."

"What conditions?" Gerard demanded eagerly.

"You remember, but you say that to gain time and evade me."

He looked at her in supreme irritation, furiously perplexed.

"You know you never spoke of any!" he exclaimed. She rejoined deliberately.

"Take care, Gloster, or you'll lose the chance of hearing now."

He pressed his lips together and was silent.

"Will you do it when I tell you what it is?" She laid her head back against her lounging-chair, and smiled as she watched him through her narrowed eyelids.

"How can I tell?" he demanded. "Well—yes—anything! I will!"

"That is right," she answered, lazily floating a kiss towards him. "When you behave right you are charming!" She seemed inclined to rest the matter here, but Gerard became fiercely restive. "Well, then, listen. You can come on New Year's Eve: your wife will be home to see the new year in. Do you hear?—that's my condition."

He stood before her silent, his face changing quietly to a dull grey tinge. Then he sprang forward and seized her wrists.

"Why the hell can't you leave out my wife? What grudge have you got against her? What has she ever done to you?"

Celestine writhed in the pain of his grip, and kept from crying out. "Let go my hands for God's sake,

Gloster!" she whispered: she felt she was going to faint. Gerard dropped her wrists and stepped back sullenly: she sank into her chair. The pain lessened rapidly, and as he watched her, she lifted her eyes with the old expression.

"What I have against her dates back to when I knew you first: the time you can't remember, Gloster, and I won't help you to. I remember a lesson I taught myself then: would you like to hear what it was?"

Gerard remained silent, his ominous face towards her, and growing livid.

"Say you want to hear."

"Well?"

"To—hate you!"

Gerard advanced and leaned above her chair, his dark eyes blackening. "Quit this fooling, Celestine!" he said distinctly, holding her regard. "Say once for all what you want."

"I say you can come here on New Year's Eve, and I say you can leave your wife alone!"

The triumphant evil in her eyes was incredible: she looked at him and laughed.

"I can't . . . . " Gerard attempted to oppose a momentary compunction to her exultant power: he knew its impotence. Celestine Lovelight drew herself from her languorous posture like a snake that waits to strike.

"Then go—!" she said. "Go!—Are you going, or will you—?"

Gerard met her eyes full of latent triumph. He filled up the pause.

"I will."

"Ah—Jernegan," said Peter Ambleon, who had

some time left the Empire City Bank, as he advanced towards the desk of his former fellow and literary guide, in a new frock coat. "A happy New Year to you! I thought—er—you and Harris there, would be interested to hear my news. The Moose Hunt is—accepted. They offer me ten—er—dollars a page, altogether about a hundred dollars."

"Bully for Mr. Ambleon!" vociferated young Harris.

"Right you are, Ambleon: never say die!" supplemented Simon Jernegan with benevolence.

"I—erghem—I had it just looked over by that useful bureau there is uptown—the Rehabilitative Rejected MS. Emendation Society: they sent me—ah—their Prospectus."

"Is that so?" rejoined the dyspeptic with irony. "I've heard of it, my son. They ought to call that the 'Patent Literary French Polish Process:'—the idea is to lay on a plausible, attractive surface over every species of defect. The circular they sent you, I surmise, is an invitation to lazy fools to have their blunders fixed up for them, and to tempt poor devils who want to earn some money to spend what they've got in tinkering up their bad work instead of setting to like men and doing some that's good. That's so, Ambleon; just the place for a man who gasps for fame at all costs and don't care how he gets it."

"They—" recommenced Peter Ambleon ignoring this, the nerve-twitch strong above his eyebrow. "They made very few—ah—alterations: retouched some pages and cut out a few, and gave it a sort of—er—professional flavor—" here Peter smiled with confidential condescension, "I only paid ten dollars, and I—ah—feel proud of my work!"

"I always said," rejoined the learned dyspeptic dog-

matically, "that there was something *in* that Hunt if you could only get it *out*. Did they give you cash down for the article, Ambleon?—Who did you sell it to?"

Peter Ambleon smiled his hesitating open smile.

"Well, Jernegan you know it's—er—accepted, but not paid for. You—ah—you know the Empire Magazine? the one that failed the other day? The Editor has planned to start again in the autumn, and relies on—ah—my article to float him through." Peter's elderly semi-cough was heard, with an intonation of superior condescension. "As I—erghem—have a handsome berth with my brother Archibald (the well-known operator; married a connection of Belmore—ah—you know) I have leisure to spend upon my literary bent—"

"Say talent right out, Mr. Ambleon!" remonstrated young Harris. Peter smiled with conscious deprecation.

"I—ah—my literary talents, then; and—er—I think I shall bring the Bluecoat School into notice soon. You know, Jernegan, I was a Bluecoat Boy, and I should like to make my old school famous."

Jernegan, whom he was looking at, turned a queer color suddenly, and coughed.

"Is that so!" he exclaimed. "That's good, sir, good. It shows fine feeling, Ambleon!"

"I guess," interposed young Harris, with enthusiasm, "we'll have to get Mr. Ambleon to write us up something about the Bank, here. Say, Mr. Ambleon, you'll fix it won't you?—and put in our Learned Pig!"

Ambleon smiled: this evidence of the ingenuous interest of a youthful soul was subtly flattering to him.

"I'll—ah—be happy, Harris. And—don't you feel

your energies confined, here? Don't you find it rather tame—?"

"Since you left that desk, Mr. Ambleon," asseverated young Harris, sternly, "we've all been kinder growing grey. The corned beef tasted worse than smoked bacon, and we've never smiled again. Say, Mr. Ambleon, make us a pun! to give us a whiff of old times, sir!"

"I eschew that now; the cud of those—ah—bitter fancies is now replaced by a good dinner; which—er—rewards a man for chewing it. But I was going to say, Harris, I think I could find you a nice—ah—clerkship—" Peter, successful as humorist and patron smiled suggestively, and put on his hat.

"Mr. Ambleon, you have my vote of thanks, sir, and I hope I'll get the chance to vote for you as Presidential candidate as well!"

Peter Ambleon held his large damp hand towards each of his fellow clerks in turn. "I—ah—I think I shall confine myself to literary successes. In politics the motive power is dollars rather than sense!"

Followed by a shout of applauding laughter, Peter withdrew.

"Harris—great Scott! I should have burst my braces if I'd kept it in much longer!"

But young Harris was black in the face.

Toller and Miss Van Kleeck met at Caprice's New Year Eve *bal masqué*. She wore a domino of soft blue, with a hood on whose side at the cheek was sewn a moth in gold; he, a black mufti. They had made sure of distinguishing each other by the moth which, on his disguise, was done in silver.

"Is that you, Wallace?" whispered Miss Van Kleeck.

"Yeth, Ida; I've been watching f'you."

"Isn't it fun?" laughed Miss Van Kleeck. "A mask ball is always more amusing than a plain one. Don't you think so? What ails you, Wallace—why don't you talk to-night?"

"I want to, only I can't thee how to do it, y'know. Juth lithen, Ida. I thought I'd wait till we got int' the mathks, and then it would be eathier. Don't think I'm a fool f'ler, but I want you t'be m'wife. Y'know, Ida, you've alwayth helped me 'long an' kept m'head above water. I'm grateful, dear; I do thwear I am. If you hadn't turned up lath summer I think I'd have killed m'self, one way an' another; but you're thuch a good girl, Ida. Y'know, I loved her—I ca' tell you how much, but thath's all past now, an' she's—happy. You tried t' make that eathier for me, an' I want t'thank you now, tho we can put it athide with all the past, and begin again together. D'you think you can forget I thtammer—an'—an'—trust me ath much ath that?"

Miss Van Kleeck looked up through the eyes of her mask and smiled, and pressed the hands that held her own.

"I think I might, Wallace," she answered, in a voice that trembled a little. "Because I am fond of the stammer—and I never trusted any one as I do you."

"Per-cy," whinged Mrs. Gore, on the morning of New Year's Day at the breakfast table, directing her languishing green glance on Mrs. Blandy, "Is absolutely lost to shame or any other feeling. Look what he's sent me, Fanny!" she cried, holding out a newspaper cutting to Mrs. Pell.

"Let's see," said the latter, running through the paragraphs rapidly. "Ha! ha! ha!—here's a joke! they'll go for Ormond next!

Gore and Pell were playing with the Halleck Company in San Francisco, and Mrs. Pell read from a local paper dated a few days before, the following:

"A celebrated restaurant on —— street was yesterday the scene of an amusing occurrence. Mr. Percy Gore, the well-known actor, playing here at present with the Halleck Company, is in the habit of breakfasting at this house, when he sometimes runs over his lines for the evening's performance. Yesterday a couple of provincial innocents just come to town, were occupying the next box to Mr. Gore's when the actor arrived. Things were quiet for five minutes, and then a troubled voice arose.

"'To think,' said the voice, deep-laden with remorse, and full of awful meaning, 'to think that he was butchered in his sleep!'

"'The two provincials looked at each other, and gasped, and held their breath. The guilty voice again arose, accompanied by a business-like cracking of egg-shells, whose incongruity lent weirdness to the strange effect. 'Shall I never put away that fearful sight? The old man, his face all stained with gore,—his white hair bedabbled with his blood, pursues me! O, to think I murdered him!—And even then he smiled at, and forgave me!' The innocents next door had about all they could stand. They tumbled out of their compartment, their mouths full of pan-roast and their looks of dire alarm. Meeting Mr. Dash, the proprietor, they charged at him and gasped out: 'You've got a most astounding villain in here, sir! he's next box to us, and says he killed his father,—butchered him! Describes the act—white hair—knife—blood—!!'

"'Yes, sir," replied Mr. Dash, quite blandly, 'one of the most successful scoundrels known to us. He is

Mr. Percy Gore, who is just concluding a long and successful career of villainy at the Blankwin Theatre.'

"The innocents did not wait to finish up their breakfast there, and the name of Mr. Gore remains in their minds synonymous with sudden death. They felt unsafe in San Francisco, and fled the city last night."

"I think it very hard that you should all take it that way," said Mrs. Gore, "without the slightest sympathy—!"

She glanced round the table; Mrs. Blandy's ear rings trembled with her mirth; Ed Blandy expressed himself hilariously; Jerry Crœsus smiled with silent relish, and Kershaw with irony.

"Fanny, I thought *you* might have been my friend!" lamented the little woman weakly. "Of course we all know what Percy is; and no one can reform him; but when the newspapers begin to hit at him, and set their awful funny-men upon him—oh—!"

Here a burst of laughter shook the table, but Mrs Gore mourned on.

"To think that even there they know what he is—just saturated with every wickedness like old McGuffey! I've wasted my life in trying to bring him to reason, but he's too far gone for that. And oh! that even the papers should expose him!"

Suddenly quiet dropped down around them. Munch stood clutching the maple-syrup pitcher with an indescribable expression.

"Misthruss Gore," said Munch, "did yez mention a matther of shpindin' a loife to reclaim from the divil the man ye musht stick by for betther or worse? 'Tis not all wives has wan so simple an' swate to get back from the divil, *nor sind till him.* 'Tis thrue yez throies to do wan or the other; I think 'tis the lasht yez succeeded in best. Whin a gintleman foinds his

conduct asparsed, an' his doings by noight an' day thracked out, an' his friends denounced for scallywags too; and all by the woife that his boosum houlds dear, 'tis enough to make his soul black in a noight, an' turn his hearte intoirely! An' is it the way to persuade him back, Misthruss Gore, to do what yez did the day he left? To shtart up a banging ould threadle-machine, at the moment he's thrying to sing till himself and play on the pianny?"

Here a howl escaped Ed Blandy that terrified his mother. His head hung over the back of his chair, and his limbs which had partially collapsed beneath the table, twitched like St. Vitus's Dance. "Munch, you're a fool!" screamed Mrs. Blandy. "Get out! you've given Ed hysterics!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

CELESTINE LOVELIGHT.

GERARD, when the incentive of resistance was removed, looked on his intrigue with Celestine with increasing lightness and indifference. The capricious and transient inclination she had roused in him, gratified, subsided rapidly while Celestine believed it still at its height. Sallie Jewel, however, estimated the possibilities more shrewdly.

"This will not last long," she said with significance. "You had best be the first to say good-bye."

Celestine, flushed with inordinate vanity and confidence in her success, for the first time rejected the counsels of her friend. Sallie Jewel smiled.

Gladys had fallen into a habit of waiting, watching for what never came. She did not suspect that another interest in the life of Gerard had lessened her attraction: she thought that perhaps this strange discouragement might be a common difficulty with which young wives contended, and which would be overcome with silent patience. A pathetic expression of expectancy with resignation became habitual in her spiritual eyes. She was always waiting for that time when Gerard should turn to her again.

The first month of the new year was passing. Snow lay deep in the city, and shone on the bare brown branches of the trees. The afternoon sun struck through the side streets from the west across the avenues, and the great white pile of the Cathedral stood against the deep skies like an edifice of snow. Fifth avenue was brilliant and musical with sleighs, which

passed with rich fur robes and chiming bells on the road to Central Park.

Gerard drove up from the Union, and ordered his sleigh to be prepared as he entered.

"Where is Mrs. Gerard?" he enquired of the servant admitting him.

"In the small reception room, sir," responded the lackey. He passed in there.

"Gladys?"

"Gloster. . . . !"

She rose, trembling imperceptibly; his voice warned her that the change which she had waited for had come. She passed towards him with an exquisite mingling of diffidence and caressing question, her eyes upon his face. The old smile touched his lips, and lingered in his regard like a subtle light; he took her hands which trembled in his own, and tenderly kissed her forehead.

"Will you drive with me to-day, Gladys?—you ought not to be here alone."

She raised her sweet mouth for another kiss, and with that answer left him.

Gerard lounged against the mantel and watched the fire which burned below. Perhaps he felt for the first time a pleasure in performing an action which accorded with duty; at least he reviewed with a growing fastidious disgust the past two months. Beeckman had unconsciously infused an element of constant irritation in his married life, which caused him a restlessness and discontent that might not have otherwise existed. Had not Celestine diverted his attention at the moment his brother's influence was withdrawn, Gerard would probably have found in his life with Gladys a new phase of interest; and their companionship, undisturbed by this intangibly disquieting element, would

have become additionally intimate and tender. However, now the coarse provocation of Celestine palled on him (her disguised connection with his past had longest sustained her attraction for him) he began to experience a cool retrospective disgust. The pure charm of Gladys intensified its attraction against the contrast of his mistress' personality, though he was aware that he was not worthy to meet her eyes; this, however, heightened the charm, as it had always done; and he felt, renewed, some of the keen enjoyment of his earliest passion for her. He acknowledged to himself with that perspicuous candor which clarified all his mental processes, that Gladys would probably retain dominion upon him longer than any other, since, if his lower nature was seduced, his latent fastidiousness found in her a perfect gratification of his corrected tastes. Celestine became a thing of the past during the time he waited for his wife; he forgot that he had given her no warning of his desire to terminate their connection. As he watched lazily the fire of aromatic pine, whose flame light reflected in his eyes, Gladys returned.

Heavy wraps of silver-fox fell to her feet, with an inimitably dignified and soft effect; and a faint color touched her cheeks like the memory of his two kisses. As she paused, pushing back the portière of dim gold plush, whose deep lights fused with the pale lights in her hair, the old eloquent luminous smile lit her eyes and rested on her mouth. Gerard looked up, and saw her standing there. He keenly despised himself, and with an impulse genuinely strong and unreflecting. He felt contempt for himself of the past, but deeper contempt for himself of the future. He was one of those whose minds dissect their hearts, and who know that while God may be Father to mankind, the Devil is commonly their ruler.

In Central Park the picturesque procession of sleighs flew along to the tune of their bells; the horses' feet fell silent on the snow-plats, and the effect was full of animation and *entrain*. Gerard and his wife entered the drive and shot ahead, his firm wrist and accurate eye guiding skilfully. The clear air, crisp with frost, and ringing with the sleigh-bells' varying chime, inspired him; he felt an unusual relish for the unreflecting physical enjoyment of vitality. Gladys' hand lay within his arm, and as they sped on through the crowd of tasseled and silver harnessed horses, and sleighs filled with robes of fur, she pressed his arm, and spoke to him.

"Gloster, I am very happy. Are you glad?"

His eyes met hers with a swift glance, singularly bright, reflecting his smile.

"Why do you ask?" he said, a slight perverse expression touching his lips.

"Because my whole life is perfected by your sympathy; do you not know that yet?"

Gerard's eyes lost their indefinable raillery and softened suddenly, held by her deep regard of tenderness and question.

At the moment a large Russian sleigh approached, cushioned in red velvet; its horses, whose gold-mounted harness was a souvenir of Toller's unconsidered liberality, were crested with red aigrettes and shook clashing gilded bells. Celestine Lovelight was lounging against the cushions of her equipage, wrapped in sables, and wearing a small audacious bonnet of her favorite color. The keen air had touched her cheeks with a finer tinting than her rouge, and the luxurious background of splendid red threw up her *tout ensemble*. Her black Ukraine horses were replaced by thoroughbreds of strawberry-roan, and he[illegible] and

that which held Gerard and Gladys were yet distant when she distinguished them. A broad flash of triumph lit her eyes; and her lips paled suddenly. Going towards her former mistress in the splendid equipage bought by the gold of Gerard, she felt an incalculable exultation; a sense of final victory. Her blunt lips, white with strong emotion, set together, and her eyes fixed on Gladys' face. As the vehicles drew near, Gerard's look lifted, and he saw her come. Her regard met his for a second, and turned again on the face of his wife its insatiable light. Gladys, whose thoughts were lingering on the words they had exchanged, and his new tenderness, divined the antagonistic influence, and raised her eyes. The sleighs were passing closely: Celestine's robes of fur swept the side of Gerard's and touched the knees of Gladys. The grave and startled eyes of Gerard's wife met with blending dignity and compassion his mistress' consuming gaze, which, as the moment of their encounter passed, gave out a glowing inward light. Gerard gave his horses a blow of the whip, and the sleigh shot ahead rapidly. Gladys shrank nearer to him; she felt the powerful inimical influence projected on her still distinct.

"Did you see—that woman?" she asked him, quietly, her eyes averted. "She was once my maid; my mother brought her from London when she was an orphan and starving. I was sorry for her, and used to try and render her position less dependent; she left us when my father lost his fortune, and I have never seen her since. I did not think she would have chosen that life. Gloster, I am so grieved."

Gerard had grown slowly white as he listened; the link between his past and the face of the courtesan was supplied. Suddenly turning towards his wife:

"Do not see such women as that!" he said, imperi-

ously, his brows contracting. "Do not speak of them. It is not fit that *you* should know of their existence."

Gladys was silent; she met his stern regard with a swift glance of shy acknowledgement.

"Beloved," she thought, losing her impression of misgiving in the sense of his protecting care.

Celestine Lovelight had lain down after her drive, and was asleep. This was a judicious habit of Sallie Jewel's which she had recommended to her friend as economizing efficiently at once her energy and beauty. Her maid entered the room with hesitation, and came towards the couch. Touching her mistress' wrist, she was about to speak when Celestine awoke.

"What the devil did you wake me for?" she exclaimed. "I told you to leave me quiet. What do you want?"

The woman disregarded this ebullition.

"Mr. Gerard, ma'am. He wishes to speak to you at once."

"Tell him to be shot!—he can come to-night after the theatre. I won't see him now!" She turned upon her side, and drew the gold silk of the eider-down quilt against her throat. "I will not see him!" she repeated sullenly. "Don't dare disturb me again."

She lay conjecturing what had brought him, lazily, half asleep, while the memory of the encounter of the afternoon filled her with triumph. As she was losing consciousness the handle of the door clicked sharply and aroused her. Her eyes, flashing open, met those of Gerard, who entered the room and came quietly towards her.

Celestine sprang up, throwing back the light quilt of silk with a furious gesture. "How dare you come in here!" she screamed. "I told them to say I would not see you!"

They confronted each other: he, standing in an easy attitude, regarding her coolly; she, with stormy brows and loosened hair, holding the whiteness of laces and fine soft linen against her angry breast.

"However," rejoined Gerard with composure, "I said that *I* would see you." His dark eyes suddenly glittered keenly, holding hers in their controlling gaze; Celestine's mouth set sullenly.

"Well," she said. "What have you come for, then?"

"To tell you, besides some other things, that I know what you were when I first saw you: the dependant of my wife. To-day, in passing you, she condescended to speak of you with compassion; to tell me that she grieved to see you what you are. Had I not known this I should have forgotten you like others of your kind; as it is I shall remember the exceptional baseness which could hate in the place of feeling gratitude. It must be a heavy debt which you owed —?"

"Yes, and I haven't paid it yet!" Celestine, enraged by Gerard's cold scorn, and impressed with a new intolerable sense of impotence and inferiority, was becoming dangerously roused; clearness of perception was obscured by the rising savage gust of rage. "I haven't paid it yet!" she repeated, looking him full in the eyes; a furious impulse drove her to menace, though indefinitely.

"And you probably will not," rejoined Gerard. "She is very far beyond contact with you. This apartment is engaged until the end of January, next week. After that you can secure it at your own expense if you desire. I shall not see you again after to-day. You comprehend?"

His words drew the life tints from her face, where the rouge lay ghastly as if rubbed upon a mask of clay.

"You'll leave me, Gloster?" she cried out, her desperate eyes upon him wildly. "Leave me—me! You're fooling me! you can't mean that!" Suddenly clinging to his arm, as she swayed, reeling with a passing vertigo, "Don't you know I used to hate her because—I —loved—you?"

Gerard's fine black brows contracted: he slightly shook the arm on which she leaned. "Leave hold of me!" he said. "My wife's hand rested there to-day."

Celestine's arms dropped at her side. "By God, I wish that I could kill you!" she muttered, in a keen yet suffocated voice, abruptly comprehending her defeat. Aware that Gerard was irrevocably lost, a subsequent imperative instinct of dissimulation alone absorbed her. With a haggard laugh she fixed her eyes upon him, twisting between her fingers a length of her coarse black loosened hair. While supporting herself against the bed by which she stood, she continued this mechanical burlesque of coquetry.

"Well, you startled me, or I should have taken it easier. The truth is I'd wanted to say the same to you. I had a handsome offer four days ago from a man worth two millions: a man who'll look out for me better than you—he has no wife—"

Gerard turned on his heel with a gesture of incredible irony.

"Do you think," he said coolly, "I care to hear your —lies? I have the honor to take leave of you.'

Gladys was making her toilette for dinner when Gerard returned. She wore Niphetos roses with the habitual warm white of her dress: arranging them at her breast as she had done upon the night of her betrothal. As the mirror of Venice reflected her, fastening the pale buds with the clasp of fire-opals, Ge-

rard entered quietly and came towards her. His face was shown in the glass before she knew of his approach: their eyes met in the calm sheet with a moment's welcoming recognition. Then she turned and spoke to him, touching the buds of the white rose caressingly.

"Do you remember the rose I gave you, Gloster, that dropped away and faded as you kissed it? It made me feel so sad: I thought it was an omen. But now I know it was not so, for my life is happy still and these are other roses which are fresh and sweet."

Gerard answered silently: drawing her into his strong embrace with surpassing tenderness. As his lips touched her temples and her veined eyelids, they were nearer that spiritual union which renders perfect the connection of united lives than they had ever been.

Dinner had terminated, and Gerard entered the great reception-room; Gladys followed him. Through the apartment spread an indefinable cold atmosphere of disuse: the grand piano was closed, and though logs were burning, thrown across the heavy dogs of brass upon the hearth, no seats were drawn towards the fire in suggestion of intimate habitual intercourse. Gladys had never entered the room, unless when entertaining, since the evening she passed alone when Gerard had left her there. He also met, in returning, a sudden distasteful reminder of the ball of New Year's Eve: but this passed lightly: he estimated too accurately the affair of Celestine Lovelight to believe it worth remorse.

Gladys paused by a jar of Satsuma filled with the pink-stained petals of the Japanese lily. Playing idly with the flowers, whose saffron pollen dusted her finger-tips, she looked across them towards Gerard, with a soft, bright, enigmatic smile.

"Do you want to stay home this evening, Gloster?"

she asked, meeting his eyes and dropping her own with delicious coquetry upon the flowers. "Because I am engaged for the dance at Mrs. Belmore's, and have cards for a grand musicale at Mrs. Loftus Scaler's. Do you expect you will miss me if I go?" The little alluring smile still touched her mouth, and masked in her eyes: she had singled one lily from amongst the rest, and held it lightly to her lips. Gerard, lounging against the tall carved mantel, watched her with an answering subtle light of raillery in his half-closed eyes.

"I do not know," he said: "but do you think—you will not miss me?"

Gladys lifted the little yellow beast from where he purred beside her ankle, holding his warm and supple shape against her throat demurely.

"Perhaps, she said. "We each might miss the other. Do you think?"

She suddenly buried her face in the striped fur, and gave a merry, soft-sounding laugh. Then, still looking at Gerard, she kissed the little yellow beast.

"Yes," said Gerard. "We might miss each other: but we will not do that again." Coming towards her, a perverse slight smile in his glittering eyes and on his lips, he lifted down the small animal, and imprisoned her hands within his own.

"And have you no other thought," he demanded, "than to kiss a cat, when I am here?"

"But—but—" replied Gladys, "he loves me; while you—did not say that you forbade my going! Perhaps he will miss me more than you."

Gerard did not answer this, but mastered the other kisses which should have fallen on the little yellow beast's striped head. She looked into his eyes with a new and winning coquetry; feigning to withhold her

laughing lips, to which this soft resistance gave another charm.

"Then you will have me stay with you, and forget the dance? But it is very naughty of us!"

Gerard laughed, with unreflecting amusement, and they exchanged a glance of sudden mischief.

"I know it," he said. "Still, the point is, that after all, we shall not miss each other."

Gladys went to the piano, and they opened it together.

"Sing to me," she suggested, shyly. "Do you care to sing to-night?"

"Yes; I could not do it otherwise: music is soulless without inspiration, which is one of the few things one cannot counterfeit. I feel inclined to-night." He shifted the songs which lay before him: "Here is Tosti's 'Good-bye.'"

"But it is so sad," she said. "It recalls to me—old memories: phases of pain which passed away; times when I suffered and there seemed no hope—"

"My little Psyche," he said, using the only *nom de caresse* he had for her, the name which expresses Soul, Mind and Joy. "You are happy now, are you not?"

"Ah, yes," she answered, tenderly, raising her earnest eyes. "But sometimes pain becomes keen long after when the cause for it is gone, as the writing done in invisible ink is distinctest when the paper burns away."

"That is true," said Gerard, recollecting abruptly his wish that Gladys could have roused in him a love like his first ardent passion. A reflection followed this which gave a look of inquiry to the sudden glance which he bent upon her. He thought: "Since then has she not done so?"

Celestine looked after Gerard as he left the room: his figure disappeared, the door closing upon him quietly. Then the rage of her repulsed passion and her mortified vanity blended in a mighty gust; she cast herself upon the bed in a convulsion of surpassing fury. At the moment a black mist rolled before her sight: tearing the fine silk of the quilt her hands had grasped, she stifled, losing consciousness.

Ten minutes after Gerard had left the house, Celestine's maid was summoned to her apartment by a violent ringing. Here she found her, livid and inert, heaped in a large *fauteuil* of crimson plush against whose color her face looked haggard.

"Order the carriage," said Celestine in a hoarse voice. "Hurry up about it. And then get me ready to go out."

Later, enveloped by her wraps of sable, she was passing through the twilight streets. She shivered, shaking with an aguish chill, though her heavy furs enclosed her. Her eyes, red-rimmed and fierce, looked ahead, the lower lids showing that ominous drop below the iris which is seen in those of savage dogs.

At the house of Sallie Jewel she was admitted. As the actress was still in her habitual afternoon *siesta*, the servants, alarmed by Celestine's violent demands, consented to throw on her the responsibility of arousing their mistress. She entered the room hung in Nile blue silks where Sallie was asleep; locking the door behind her, she reached the bed with irregular and eager steps.

"Sallie!" she called out loudly.

She did not observe that Sallie Jewel, whose light rest was a feline characteristic, had wakened at the first opening of the door; now, rising on her elbow, she regarded Celestine with a comprehensive glance. A slight baffling smile played on her lips.

"Well, has it come?" she said.

Celestine did not hear this; there was a ringing in her ears that sounded like her own hoarse voice, and held her listening for the words unconsciously. Then Sallie left the bed and lighted the gas beside the bureau. Turning, as she dropped the spent match into a tray of bronze:

"Are you ill?" she asked her, simply.

Celestine turned towards the light, and then appeared to regain lucidity. A dull flush passed across her face, and she bent her brows in a savage frown.

"I want revenge," she said. "You've got to help me. I want revenge."

Sallie Jewel glanced at her keenly.

"Tell me what it is has happened."

Celestine dilated with fury.

"He's gone back on me!" she screamed, regaining her mental balance with a shock. "I don't care if I do have to let you know that you were right. He cast me off like dirt. He told me not to touch him where her hand had lain upon his arm! . . . " She reached towards her throat as if she stifled; her bloodshot eyes were strained.

"And what do you want to have me do?" Sallie Jewel watched her with a certain irony. Celestine ground her teeth like a wild beast.

"Tell me how to get at his wife!"

Over the face of Sallie Jewel an imperceptible pallor spread. Her narrow eyes became subtly bright, and a smile played across her lips like a flame flicker.

"I will help you," she answered with composure. "I had a debt to pay one wife that I have never forgotten. Perhaps his may ease me of a part of it. Sit down here, Celestine".

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE MASK OF FATE.

"And there is nothing stable in the world,
But the gods break it."—SWINBURNE.

CELESTINE LOVELIGHT'S part for two successive nights was filled by her under-study. It was reported that she had taken pneumonia while sleighing in Central Park.

During the nights of Celestine's default, Sallie Jewel played with surpassing fascination; in the piquant *entrain* of her consummate rendering the house forgot the second favorite's absence.

Gladys was alone in the grand reception-room playing idly and happily the mazurkas of Chopin; her husband had gone to a men's supper given by Hugo Van Steen. The music sang of her new hope, of her fresh joy, of her subtle and profound reunion with Gerard; blending into her innocent dreams like the happy voice of her heart.

Upon the wonderful replying voices of the 39th Mazurka broke a dissonant reminder. A footman entered and approached his mistress.

"A lady is waiting upon important business," he announced deferentially. "She does not give her name."

Gladys left the piano and took her seat beside the hearth, the firelight shining on the pale silks of her dress, and on a brooch of pendant Orient pearls at her breast whose soft lustres dulled and shifted as she breathed.

"I will receive her," she answered.

A moment later a veiled woman, wrapped in sables which enveloped her, passed into the room. The tall door closed behind her. Gladys rose from her chair and stood beside her hearth, the smell of some Camoëns roses coming to her sweetly. "I do not remember that you are known to me," she said with dignity and grace. "May I ask what business of importance you have with me?"

The veiled woman had advanced, and her sables swept the white bear skin before the hearth. Her voice was uneven and suppressed as she replied, and upon its peculiar low tones broke an occasional, jarring, higher intonation. "I came on an errand that may surprise you, madam," she said, "a disagreeable one. But I mean for the best, I assure you."

Gladys felt an inexplicable chill, and the voice touched an unnamed chord of memory. "Have the courtesy to explain yourself," she responded, instinctively drawing back a pace.

The woman shook under her load of sables, and crushed something nearer to her breast. "I," she commenced, her forced voice unsteady with concentrated undistinguishable passion. "I have—a secret —to sell."

Gladys regarded her with sudden superb pride.

"I think," she said, "Your business cannot be with me."

Her answer had a violent effect upon the other, who attempted to disguise this, and controlled herself before continuing. A fierce vibration constantly suppressed, jarred in her voice.

"It is, then," she answered, hoarsely. "And you would find the secret worth your while to know. You'll wish you had taken it while you could, some day.

You've been fooled by some one that you love, and I could—"

An indefinable terror had touched Gladys with a chill which seemed to strike across her heart. Assembling the forces of her dignity and pride like a defence against the unnamed menace near her:

"It is enough," she interrupted. "I do not buy the secrets of those I trust."

There was silence. The woman in the sables quivered, and a sudden lurid glow indicated her eyeballs like an angry beast's behind the tissues of the veil.

"Then that—that— is your last word? You won't buy it, eh? Not if you know it's about—your—husband?"

Gladys paled, the life blood flooding to her heart, but she maintained her splendid dignity.

"Leave my presence!" she commanded, reaching her hand towards the bell. "I do not tolerate insult such as this. Leave me, or I will summon my household to remove you. My husband would defend me himself if he were here."

Reaching her hand from beneath her sables, Celestine swiftly untwisted her veil. An indescribable smile distorted her lips, and she resumed her natural tone of voice, made hoarse by concentrated passion.

"Your husband would defend you, would he? Do you know me again? All right! Since he cared for you enough to defend you, he's put me in your place. Do you hear me? Do you hear me, eh? I am your husband's mistress!"

With a grin that drew back her lips upon her large white savage teeth, she consumed the face of the woman before her, taking a quick step nearer. Gladys, with a hideous pang of physical repulsion and absorbing horror, drew back. Before she could articulate

the words that fainted at her lips, the other spoke again.

"You looked at me as you might have done at a leper when I passed you in the Park. Do you know what he did, at your side? He smiled! You looked at me as a saint might look at the devil, sorry for his sins. You didn't know what you know now, did you? You didn't think that your husband had given me everything you saw; that he gave me these sables—those horses? they're waiting outside for me now—that sleigh I rode in?—he bought them all! You didn't know it, did you? And they were worth a little more than this thing, eh?—do you remember it? I guess I can afford to give it back to you, now; he won't let me miss it, you know! And here—to finish up—"

"Leave me," said Gladys. "Leave me! . . . ."

"—To finish up, here's the proof of what I say; it's his writing—sent from the Union Club. I'll let you have it free, as you don't care to pay for—the secrets of those you trust!"

Gladys, with a supreme effort, stood erect and pressed her hand on the electric bell beside her.

"Go—" she said, "I believe nothing that you say. Go;—you taint the air I breathe."

Celestine stood for a second, laughing infernally.

"All right! And ask him whom he sent that to. He'll tell you the mistress for whom he fooled his—wife!"

She cast at the feet of Gladys, on her desecrated hearth, a letter through which was fastened the brooch of the quarter-moon. Before response to the summons could arrive, she had passed from the house and the noise of her silver sleigh bells fainted on the night.

A servant entered the room. He saw his mistress

standing by the hearth with a paper in her hands and something more which gleamed like gold.

"Do not admit the person who called this evening again," said Gladys, in a quiet and monotonous voice. He bowed and silently withdrew.

Gladys leaned against the marble mantel with a desperate strained sense of effort. She was attempting to realize the scene which had passed. The objects in the great apartment took on an aspect of unreality: a haze of blood swam between her vision and the lights of the chandelier; and shutting from her the familiar sights sprang out the triumphant face of the woman. Sandy, having wakened, leapt from his place on the piano and rubbed against her ankle. She looked down, and shivered suddenly all through her, remembering the night before. It seemed to bring close to her the horror which had found her in her innocent peace: the devastating evil swept upon her, shaking her soul with its curse of desolation. The eyes of the woman, consuming, hideous, insatiable, seemed to multiply; a thousand eyes reeled before her, watching her, fed with the sight of her anguish. Gladys clung to the mantel and hid her face: but the painted mask with its burning eyeballs sprang out of the darkness like the remorseless mask of Fate. It swept towards her; she seemed to feel its tainted breaths against her cheek: and with an insupportable impulse of horror lost consciousness.

The clock upon the mantel struck out a brief light chime. Sandy, after rubbing his supple shape against her cold brows, where she had fallen on the broad white bearskin, settled warmly on her breast. Watching her with his wary amber eyes, he drew his keen claws softly across the flesh of her bosom, leaving slight red lines, and purred continually. Gladys heard

distantly the clock's light chime, overcome by a heavy muffled thunderous sound that bewildered her returning consciousness. She felt a stifling weight upon her breast, and reawakened dully to an unformed horror that she sought in numb dread to shut away. With the effort to breathe and impalpable disquiet, her senses strengthened and she unclosed her eyes. The little yellow beast's large feathered ears rose above her against the light. With an abrupt shock of memory the past returned to her. Feebly pushing him from where he sat, she lay still exhausted by the effort. Sandy, raising his full ringed tail aloft, wove at the deep white bearskin.

Gladys forced herself to rouse: she clung to the seat by which she had fallen, and raised her body from the ground. Her left hand still held the letter through which the pin of the brooch was thrust; she looked at it and trembled dumbly, a slow whiteness spreading over her face. She was conscious of a strained inward pain across her brows and a terrible inertness; the fear that she might swoon a second time and be discovered by her servants with the letter came upon her with controlling horror.

"O God, give me strength!" she prayed. Detaching the brooch from the folded note, she opened this: the clear peculiar writing of Gerard started before her sight upon the page. She involuntarily closed her eyes.

Reaching her unsteady hands towards the *fauteuil*, she sank down upon it, trembling and inert. The whole of her past where he had been swept by her in its agonizing sweetness; she remembered, as a lost soul might dream of paradise, though no torment passes the pain of a woman who loves and is forsaken. The face of his mistress haunted her again, mocking,

remorseless, a devil's mask; seeking to keep it from her sight, she fixed her eyes upon the open letter.

"I shall be with you at midnight."

There was nothing more. It was unsigned. Gladys rose and passed across the room, holding the paper in her cold and stiffened hands. As she did so the clock told twelve.

Followed by the echoing silver strokes, with their horrible reminder and unsparing irony, she passed up the staircase holding by the balustrade. She entered her own apartment; a terrible expression came into her eyes, but she forced herself to advance, and raised the soft light in the opal-tinted globes. Her face gleamed from the mirror of Venice, showing like the face of a corpse.

Gladys unlocked her jewel-box of steel and gold inlaid on ivory. Drawing out one of the shallow drawers of sandal-wood lined with shining satin stuff, she laid the letter in it beside the brooch of the quarter-moon. An incalculable agony came upon her; here she had preserved the dead white orchid, with one of the buds of the Niphetos rose; here the reminders of him which were dear to her had rested in her happy past. The great irrevocable Yesterday of that past had sunk in the hour-glass of Time forever. She closed the ivory doors and turned away. It was like the sepulchre of her love, of her hope, and of her youth, blasted through by one consuming flame.

A strange sense of distance and unreality in her surroundings touched her; she suddenly confronted the supreme question: how should she meet Gerard? A vertigo seized her and she clung against the mantel of carved teak-wood, becoming conscious that her physical strength was breaking under the strain. The face of the woman came to her again, with its infernal

irony; she felt her brain reel, and the binding pressure on her brows grew horrible. Gladys gathered her last strength, and holding by the mantel loosened off her dress; sustained by supreme determination she reached the bed and laid herself upon it. Again with the insatiable eyes about her, while their light seemed to seat her brain, she grew insensible.

Two minutes later Gerard entered the room, and saw her where she lay. The drawn blank whiteness of her face struck on him a sudden vague disquiet. He stood beside her, looking down, and a swift stir of passion thrilled him. "She is beautiful!—beautiful!" he muttered, leaning over her. Dropping on one knee he kissed her brow.

Gladys was brought to consciousness by his clinging lips upon her temple. A moment's surpassing peace and oblivion preceded the incalculable agony of remembrance. She could not face him then, with his burning kiss upon her flesh, and the torment of passion and regret it roused consuming her. She lay unmoving as if she slept, and heard his footsteps leave her.

Time passed; a Dutch clock on the staircase struck out a deep-toned slumberous chime. It was the first hour of a new day.

Gladys, hot-lipped, a fever at her aching brows, her eyes wide-opened and strained as if sleep had left them eternally, lay stirless. Beside her Gerard calmly slept.

Time passed; memories of her life came by her, as dying leaves fall in the wind; and the face of the woman, hovering above her, made the darkness horrible. She felt a maddened impulse to cry out, and fly from the glare of the triumphant eyes; between these and her vision broke luminous flashes, and circles of blood-tinged flame. She did not measure the pass-

ing of the hours; the time was to her an agony, breathless, gathering and unbroken.

Sandy, who had followed her from the reception rooms and coiled unnoticed on a soft *fauteuil*, roused, with his singular inquiring whine and leapt upon the bed. Gerard stirred in his sleep, and sighed, and flung his hand against her breast. The pain of her soul culminated; this contact, shaking her being to the centre, full of indescribable reminder, merged her consciousness into one impulse of agonized beseeching. Pressing the nerveless hand against her breast, as a woman might her dead child's body—

"O God! Let me die!" she implored. "Let me die!—Let me die!"

It was dawn; faint grey lines ribbed the shutters at their slats, though the room was yet in darkness. An awful cry broke through the sleep of Gerard, vibrating, appalling. With the impression of it on his brain as if the air was living with its agony, he found himself staggering against the bed, an unnamed horror pervading him.

"Gladys!" he called out, "Gladys!" He reached instinctively to where she lay: her empty place was cold. Before he could reflect or comprehend, the noise of unfastened shutters flung back mixed with a second cry. Her figure, dark against the dull grey of a window fronting the slow-kindling east, showed for a second. A splintering crash of glass followed, striking his senses with a hideous fear. He sprang towards the light.

The keen air of the morning blew in his face through the broken sheet of the window.

"Where are you? Gladys! Gladys!" he shouted. His brain seemed to suddenly convulse: he momentarily lost the power of comprehension. Abruptly, against his feet swept a heavy flow of hair: a low

moan rose from there. "Help me,—save me! O God, she pursues me! I am dying; is there nowhere I can go from her? Help me! help me! help me!" . . . The face of his wife sank down where he stood, upon her hair against the floor.

Gerard made a light with a sense of horror and unreality strong upon him. The broken glass of the window showed in jagged spears and cracks; a bronze jar whose stand was nearby, and which she had dashed against the window before her strength collapsed, had rolled upon the floor; and the shape of Gladys, inert and senseless, lay cast beside it, her long hair trailing across the burnished surface.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"YOU ARE NOT HE!"

A GREAT silence pervaded the house of Gerard, like the hush of death. The avenue before it was littered down with tan to dull the sound of wheels and the entrance-bell was muffled. On the day that Celestine Lovelight returned to her place on the Bijou stage, it was known that Mrs. Gerard was attacked with the symptoms of brain fever. A week later Celestine was established on Lexington avenue; the roan thoroughbreds, sold at auction. had brought a high figure and passed into the service of Mrs. Loftus Scaler; an opulent financial magnate had taken the responsibility of replacing these; and the small bijou apartment uptown was let to an enterprising young portrait painter, introduced to society by Mrs. Belmore, whose *atelier* it became. Gerard had concealed his *liason* with Celestine during its continuance, and the clubs, usually keen to scent out scandalous coincidences, did not connect her leaving the uptown apartment with Mrs. Gerard's sudden illness.

Mrs. Varian was with her daughter, and watched by her constantly. Caprice, who had come to the house of Gerard on the intelligence reaching her, was also admitted, and aided, by her deft touch and infallible compassionate tact, the care of Gladys by her mother. These two women, deeply attached to her, attended upon her day and night; she lay in her great bedchamber hung with lapis-lazuli blue and gold, sleepless, haunted by hideous memories, and by his mistress'

exultant face. No servants were allowed to be about her, and within the house there was a stirless silence. Physicians entered and left it, their carriages passing noiselessly across the reach of tan-spread ground before the great façade: the tall Dutch clock upon the staircase was stopped to still its reverberating chime.

Mrs. Varian received a crushing blow in learning of Gerard's infidelity. When she reached her, Gladys was lying quiet, inert and exhausted: Gerard's figure, in an attitude where the spirit of an invincible pride contended against invading despair, was cast on a *fauteuil* beyond the bed; his sombre eyes met hers as she advanced.

"What is the cause of this?" she murmured. His brows contracted with a fierce expression, like that of a man under sudden mastering pain.

"You will know soon," he uttered, in a harsh dry-throated voice.

Gladys started as she lay, and looked around her with fearful hunted eyes. Mrs. Varian's cool white hand was on her wrist, and she bent over her.

"Dearest?—My Gladys?" she said softly, "Do not be afraid!"

She herself felt an impulse of unformed exceeding dread as the eyes of her daughter suddenly met hers and filled with blank incalculable horror.

"Leave me!—leave me—leave me!" she cried out, a keen edge of agony in her voice, "I am his wife—do not touch me! You have taken his love—is not that enough?" .... The phrase sank away in an exhausted moan; her hot hand went towards her eyes. "She is always near me—take her away!" said Gladys, feebly, like a child. "She says I could not keep him though I loved him; and O, I tried! I tried."

Mrs. Varian looked towards Gerard: his eyes re-

leased his wife on whom they had fixed with an incredible remorse, and met her regard full of sullen flame, like the eyes of a beast at bay. A terrible conviction reached her with his look.

'Is this true?" she asked him fiercely.

Gerard got upon his feet like a drunken man, and stood grasping the back of the *fauteuil.*

"It is," he answered, "And I am rewarded!"

With a jarring laugh he passed unsteadily across the room, and shut the door behind him.

Mrs. Varian fell on her knees by the side of the bed, and wept, suffering bitterly. The hand of Gladys, flung against the cool linen, lay near: she held it softly, and kissed the unresponsive flesh with controlling emotion.

"O my beloved, so innocently pure, why did you go from me? What passion could be as deep and tenderly protecting as my love? Sweet one, dearest, my child! that I should not have known how to spare you this!"

Days passed: Tom Varian had gone through a terrible interview with Gerard, and passed between his downtown office and his daughter's sick bed in perpetual unrest. His face grew aged and haggard as the time passed, and every morning he brought to Golden the same message:

"She is losing strength. We are in the hands of God."

On the eighth day Beeckman Gerard met Jesse B. Hartshorn in the streets of Paris.

"I have just come across," said Hartshorn, gravely. "Have you had a cablegram lately? I thought you would have passed me going back; I am afraid the illness is severe."

Beeckman, unnerved by mental suffering, answered rapidly:

"What is there wrong, sir? I have not heard of it."

Hartshorn was too far tactful and considerate to exhibit his surprise.

"I heard the day I left New York, that your brother's wife has brain fever. I hope, as no warning has been sent to you, that the case is not serious."

Beeckman Gerard regarded him with a strange expression of effort in his look. Hartshorn, divining his disquiet, allowed him to disengage himself. When the patrician figure of the older man was lost in the crowds of the Boulevard, Beeckman hailed a *fiacre* and drove rapidly to his hotel. Some hours later he was on his way to Havre; and following this on the French boat for New York.

Caprice and Mrs. Varian finally became resident in the house of Gerard, attending Gladys in turn through the hours of the day and the long night watches. The terrible indignation of Mrs. Varian never abated, and gave to her soft and delicate physiognomy a sternness which became habitual. Caprice, after abandoning herself to compassion for her friend mixed with vivid resentment against Gerard, gradually altered her attitude of mind, and found herself relenting. He seldom left his seat on the *fauteuil* near to the bed, and watched sleeplessly day and night in silence. There was something in his aspect and in his silent watching, that touched the heart of Caprice, who possessed the most rare and perfect attribute of woman, tolerance; and she commenced to regard him softy and wistfully, with fugitive feminine regret.

It was at night that Gladys became most unquiet. As twilight fell and the shaded globes of gas were lighted dimly, a terrible reminder seemed to reach her, which assumed the form of dread and premonition. At night the courtesan had assailed her, and the scene recurred to her at night. As the artificial light

replaced the daylight in her room, she began to show an indefinable terror which strengthened constantly. She lay quiet, shivering with subtle chills, her eyes wide open with a strained bright listening look.

A church clock near the house of Gerard told the quarter-hours loudly. Between sunset and midnight the horror on her culminated. Watching, with the bright gaze like a hunted creature's in her eyes, she believed the surroundings of the great reception rooms about her. She shifted her posture as she lay, continually pressing her hand against her dry white lips. As the agitation increased she began to speak, low at first, as if she feared to be overheard.

"She is coming: I hear the sleigh bells ringing; nearer—nearer—nearer! Can I not keep her out,—away? I cannot bear her cruel eyes!—No, she is coming; I hear them now—louder—louder—louder! Why am I all alone here when she is coming to torture me? Why is it? Why is it? I have not always been alone. How long have they left me all alone to meet her? I have seen this place before. Ah, I am so weary; and it is years—years—years. . . . She is coming! Hush! She is coming! The bells are deafening me—they cease! Listen—listen! the door has opened; she is stealing up the hall! She is coming—coming in like a thief, and I cannot hear her footstep; but that is the sound of silk, the cloak of furs she says he gave her . . . .Who is he? . . . Ah, I'm mad! I'm mad! . . . Quick, let me think before she —Gloster! O, dear God, my husband!"

In her dim intensifying horror of the woman she had forgotten all the rest. The sudden connection of him with her fear, stung her to overwhelming agony. Gerard, his face grey as ashes, left his seat and stood near her, shaking all through him. Her bright eyes

fixed ahead of her, dilating; she saw alone the delirious vision.

"Leave me! leave me! leave me! I believe nothing! Go from me! He is somewhere near me—he can speak himself; he will tell me he is true. What? . . . Not here? Why do you say that?—I will call him: Gloster! Gloster!" She lay, subtle tremors shivering through her, listening, holding her breath to hear. Gerard knelt down by the side of her bed and laid his hand on hers with supplication. Caprice's luminous blue eyes watched, brilliant and soft with unshed tears.

"Gladys," he murmured, "Gladys, I am here."

Her eyes turned on him with a sudden glance, fugitive and full of fear.

"Do not touch my hand," she said, "I called my husband; you are not he."

Gerard's haggard gaze met the look of Caprice, whose tears were falling swiftly; he rose and went to the deep *fauteuil*, and cast himself there, his face against the velvet. If she should sink and die, and never know again his touch or presence! He was weighed down with the heavy retribution of his sin as if years were weighing on him.

It was the sixteenth day. Varian, tortured with rage and dread, unable to keep still, reached his office about noon. Golden was sitting there. He looked up with the habitual glance of question which occurred between them on their meeting. Varian threw himself into a revolving chair, and laid his head down on his arms against the desk.

"They tell me she is sinking," he muttered, and broke into a paroxysm of deep-chested sobbing.

Golden's eyelids and lips, already pale with a strain-

ed and sleepless look, grew bloodless and drawn like those of an aged man. He did not answer him.

That night, as on every other night since the first of Gladys' illness, a quiet footstep passed and returned before the mansion of Gerard. Golden left his empty rooms at twilight, and drifted inevitably to where he knew she suffered. The moon waned and set, and Orion pathed the deep night sky above the city; but his figure, slow and yet unresting, took its way near to the silent house. He looked up at the broad façade cold in the moonlight, sombre in shadow, where his heart was, full of weariness, with her. At dawn he went away.

On that night, as Golden kept his solitary watch, a carriage drove furiously up the avenue, and halted at the house of Gerard. A man descended, rapidly reached the doors, and entered the house. Golden looked after him with a hungry keen desire in his regard.

"Perhaps I shall never see her again," he thought, setting his teeth together. A mortal pain was at his heart.

A servant silently entered the room where Gladys lay, and signalled to Gerard, The crisis was approaching, and Varian and his wife were watching every breath she drew. Gerard, sunk in his deep *fauteuil*, saw only the face of his wife; but Caprice, who had taken her place near him, with a strange instinct of defence of the man who had all odds against him, essentially feminine, moved soundlessly to the door.

"Mr. Beeckman Gerard is below, ma'am," said the servant in a whisper. Caprice glided back and spoke to Gerard. His eyes, into which a strange flame shot, met hers: he had lost his self-command.

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Later, the two men met in the great reception room. Their physiognomies, similar and yet distinct, were curiously contrasting. Beeckman was colorless with a grey pallor; the muscles of his mouth twitched with nervous tension: Gerard's face, suffused with a dull flush, was set in a sternness of expression fierce and sullen as his bloodshot eyes.

"How is she, Gloster?" whispered the elder brother, advancing with terrible eagerness.

"She is dying," answered Gerard.

Beeckman Gerard set his teeth like a man who keeps silent under a deadly hurt. "For God's sake take me to her," he gasped, the slow blood seeming to choke his arteries and chill his laboring heart.

A second carriage had arrived in haste: a physician was by the bed. As the brothers reëntered, her voice came to them, a strengthless broken wail.

"Gloster, come to me! O, come to me! Why are you never near me? Why do you never come when I call?"

Gerard's face changed fearfully and grew again grey like the color of quenched ashes. He went to her bedside and flung himself down there, surrendering at last to the torment in him.

"God in heaven, will she never hear?" he cried out. "Gladys! Gladys! It is I!"

She looked at him gently, but with a hopeless pain of regret in her pleading eyes.

"No, Beeckman, do not try to deceive me; I only long for him. I feel very tired; if I could see him I think I should go to sleep. . . . Why do you not bring him to me? Where is he? Why does he not come?"

At the moment Beeckman Gerard's white face took on a sudden fresh expression, keenly intense, a sort of desperate hope.